Arkadij Naiditsch
Csaba Balogh

Best attacking games of 2012–2015

Aronian vs Anand

16...♘de5!!

Chess Evolution

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Arkadij Naiditsch
Csaba Balogh

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Cover designer
Piotr Pielach

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Piotr Pielach ‹www.i-press.pl›

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ul. Smutna 5a, 32-005 Niepolomice, Poland

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KEY TO SYMBOLS

= Equality or equal chances

⩲ White has a slight advantage

⩱ Black has a slight advantage

± White is better

∓ Black is better

+- White has a decisive advantage

-+ Black has a decisive advantage

∞ unclear

⩯ with compensation

⇄ with counterplay

↑ with initiative

→ with an attack

∆ with the idea

□ only move

N novelty

! a good move

!! an excellent move

? a weak move

?? a blunder

!? an interesing move

?! a dubious move

+ check

mate

INTRODUCTION

Useful information for our valued readers.

››› The book contains the 50 best attacking games from 2012 to 2015.

››› The games were selected and analyzed by the authors GM Arkadij Naiditsch and GM Csaba Balogh.

››› Most of the games are taken from the highest-level tournaments, such as Wijk aan Zee, FIDE Grand Prix series, Olympiads etc.

››› Most of the games are played by top Grandmasters: Carlsen, Anand, Kramnik, Aronian, Caruana and many, many more of the world’s best chess-players.

››› The games are sorted in chronological order, from 2012 through to 2015.

EDITORIAL PREFACE

We are proud to present our first book in a series of 5 — “The best attacking games from 2012-2015”.

It was very interesting work trying to select and analyse the 50 best games from the past 4 years: the choice was so wide! We were aiming to find the most interesting, spectacular and, of course, useful attacking ideas which might also occur in our own practical games.

The main idea behind this book stands out clearly: We try to reduce the importance of opening theory, and rather get inside the workings of the best chess-playing brains on the planet in an attempt to explain the most complex attacking ideas in a simple and understandable way to any chess lover.

Another very important point of the book which we are proud of is, we have not used much ’engine’ assistance during our commentary on the games. We try to see the game the way we would do in a practical game, which makes the commentaries very special - which in practice puts the reader fully in the shoes of the world-class players; this is exactly the best way to improve our own chess level.

Sadly, nowadays, we have more-and-more computer analyses and we can hear chess amateurs judging the play even of Carlsen. Yes, you can find tactical mistakes with an engine at home - but the question is, can you do the same during your practical game over the board ?! Chess is a game where everyone is making mistakes - and this is what it is all about in the current book!

We would advise all our readers to take out a real chessboard and enjoy these beautiful masterpieces. This is how we learned to play chess and this is why we still enjoy every wonderful game, even after almost 20 years of being professional chess players!

Yours,
Arkadij Naiditsch & Csaba Balogh

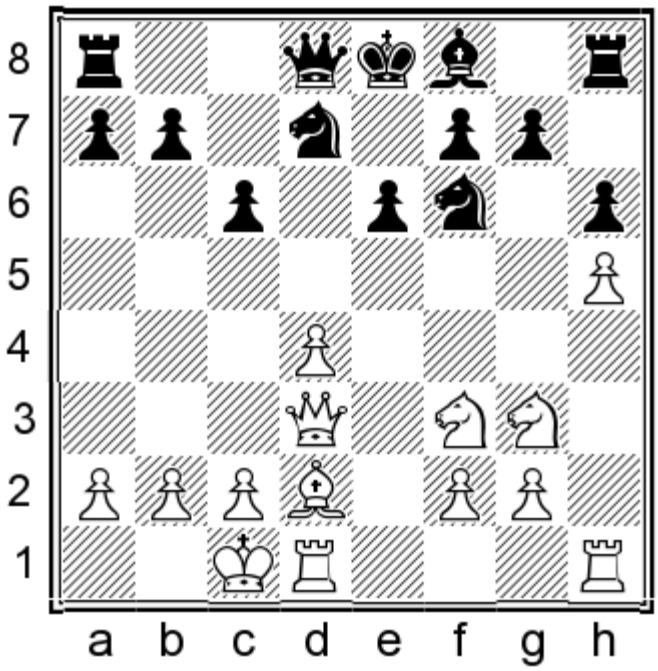
GAME 1
G. Kamsky (2741)
Y. Seirawan (2643)
ch-USA 2012 Saint Louis USA (9)
17.05.2012, [B19]
Annotated by Balogh Csaba

Gata Kamsky won a beautiful game against the Caro-Kann Defense, and the game is interesting from a theoretical point of view as well.

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5

Recently, the Caro-Kann has been having its best period ever and we very often encounter this opening, even at the highest levels. The advance variation with 3.e5 is White's favorite nowadays, but fashion changes from time to time.

3.♘c3 dxe4 4.♘xe4 ♗f5 5.♘g3 ♗g6 6.h4 h6 7.♘f3 ♘d7 8.h5 ♗h7 9.♗d3 ♗xd3 10.♕xd3 e6 11.♗d2 ♘gf6 12.0-0-0



12...♗e7

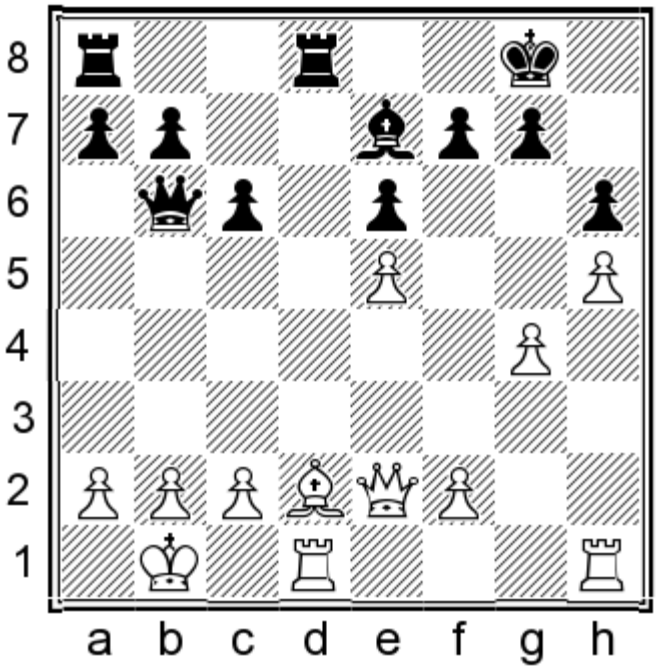
This is considered to be the basic position of the 3.♘c3 line, where White can choose between 3 big setups. Black's other main option — with 12...♕c7 followed by 0-0-0 — has gone out of fashion now.

13.♘e4

13.♔b1 and 13.♕e2 are the two other approaches.

13...♘xe4 14.♕xe4 ♘f6 15.♕d3 0-0

For Caro-Kann fans I would probably suggest 15...♘g4. This is how the big opening expert, Alexey Dreev, played a few months ago. 16.♕e2 0-0 The knight is very annoying on g4. It prevents the typical g4 pawn sacrifice, which we will see in our current game as well. 17.♘e5 ♘xe5 18.dxe5 ♕b6 19.♔b1 ♖fd8 20.g4



20...♕b5! This is Black's defensive resource. 21.♕xb5

(If White wants to keep the queens on the board with *21.c4 ♕c5 22.f4 b5!* Black creates his counterplay against the provoked weakness of c4.)

21...cxb5 22.♗e3 b6 23.c3 ♖ac8 Black was more or less fine in Guseinov-Dreev, Plovdiv 2012. The standard 15...♕d5?! is not advisable here 16.c4 ♕e4 because of 17.♕b3! b5 18.♖he1 ♕f5 19.♘e5! and Black has serious problems on the queenside.

16.♔b1

Preparation for the g4 sacrifice. On 16.g4 a theoretically very important game was played 2 months ago: 16...♘xg4 17.♖hg1 ♘xf2 18.♕e2 ♘xd1 19.♗xh6 ♗f6 20.♗xg7 ♗xg7 21.h6 ♕f6 22.♕h2

(*22.♖xg7+ ♔h8 23.♘g5 ♕xh6 24.♖h7+ ♕xh7 25.♘xh7 ♔xh7 26.♕h5+* leads to a draw as well.)

22...♕xf3 23.hxg7 ♕e3+! 24.♔b1

(*24.♔xd1 ♕xd4+ 25.♔c1 ♕xg1+ 26.♕xg1 ♖fe8*∓)

24...♘c3+! The only way to avoid mate 25.bxc3 ♕xg1+! 26.♕xg1 ♖fd8 Everything was more or less forced until this moment. I remember that I was watching this game live, and both players were blitzing out the moves until this moment. This is what we call computer chess. 27.♕g5 ♔h7 28.♕f6 ♖d7 29.♔b2 ♖g8 30.♕h4+ ♔xg7 31.♕g3+ ♔f8 32.♕b8+ ♔g7 33.♕g3+ ♔f8 34.♕b8+ ♔g7 35.♕g3+ 1/2–1/2 Hovhannisyan-Akopian, Plovdiv 2012.

16...c5

Black's main strategy in this opening is to open the position with this c5 break, and in the endgames (after the heavy pieces are exchanged on the d-file) the h5 pawn might become a real weakness. Black has won many games this way...

17.g4!

And this is White's strategy! He must launch an attack against the Black king, which is also very natural in case of opposite-side castling. Of course, delivering mate has a higher value than one pawn. :)

17...♘xg4

Black must accept the sacrifice. Allowing White to play g5 is too dangerous. 17...cxd4 18.g5 hxg5 19.♗xg5 followed by an attack on the g-file.

18.♕e2!

Kamsky protects the f2 pawn before playing ♖hg1. Seirawan reacts with the first choice of the machine, and probably they were both still in their preparation.

18...♔h8

Moving out of the way of ♗xh6 after ♖hg1–♘f6. Another idea could be 18...♕b6 to defend the e6 pawn after 19.♖hg1 f5 but here White plays the energetic 20.♘e5! ♘xe5 21.dxe5→ with huge pressure on the g-file.

19.♖hg1 ♘f6 20.dxc5

20.♗xh6 would have been premature 20...gxh6 21.♕e3 ♖g8 22.♕xh6+ ♘h7 23.♘e5 ♕f8 Black defends against the concrete threats and preserves the extra piece.

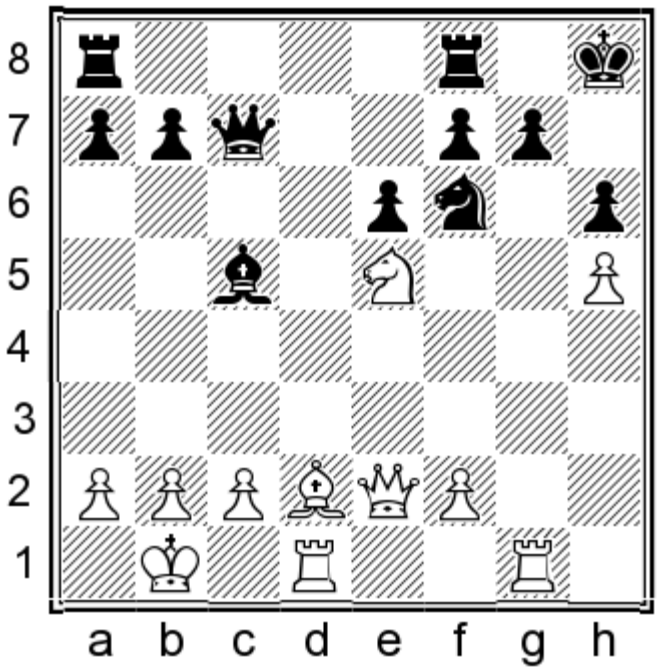
20...♕c7

Black had to escape from the pin on the d-file.

21.♘e5!

Kamsky brings his pieces into the attack, but Caro-Kann players know that Black's defensive possibilities are excellent in this opening.

21...♗xc5?



21...♖ad8! should have been played, when it is not at all easy to continue the attack 22.b4 might be the strongest move for White, but of course it has its downside as well.

(*22.♖de1 ♗xc5; 22.f4* does not work with the idea of ♕g2 *22...♗xc5* The bishop controls the g1 square; *22.♖g3 ♗xc5 23.♖dg1 ♖xd2! 24.♕xd2 ♕xe5*)

22...a5 23.a3 axb4 24.axb4 followed by ♗f4. White's prospects seem to be slightly preferable.

22.♗xh6!! gxh6 23.♖d7!!

A fantastic tactical shot to lure the knight from the defense! After 23.♕d2? ♕xe5 24.♕xh6+ ♘h7 White has nothing.

23...♕xd7!

The only move to avoid mate, but it loses material. 23...♘xd7 24.♕d2! ♔h7 25.♘g4!! This is the whole point! The mate is unavoidable.

24.♘xd7 ♘xd7 25.♕d2!

This double attack finishes the game.

25...♔h7 26.b4

There was nothing wrong with 26.♕xd7+-

26...♖ad8 27.bxc5 ♘f6

27...♘xc5 28.♕f4+- with the threat of ♕f6.

28.♕f4

Black could resign at this moment, but Seirawan tries for few more moves.

28...♘e8

28...♘xh5 29.♕e4+ ♔h8 (*29...f5 30.♕xe6+*-) 30.♕e5++-

29.♕e4+

29.♖g6! was the computer finish!

29...♔h8 30.♕xb7 ♘g7 31.♕xa7 ♖c8 32.♖d1 ♘f5 33.♖d7 ♔g7 34.a4 ♔f6 35.a5 1–0

GAME 2
Nguyen Ngoc Trungson (2656)
P. Harikrishna (2693)
Asian Nations Cup ZaoZhuang, China
24.05.2012, [E45]
Annotated by Balogh Csaba

An impressive win in the Asian Nations Cup! Black probably mixed something up in his preparation and found himself in deep trouble right after the opening.

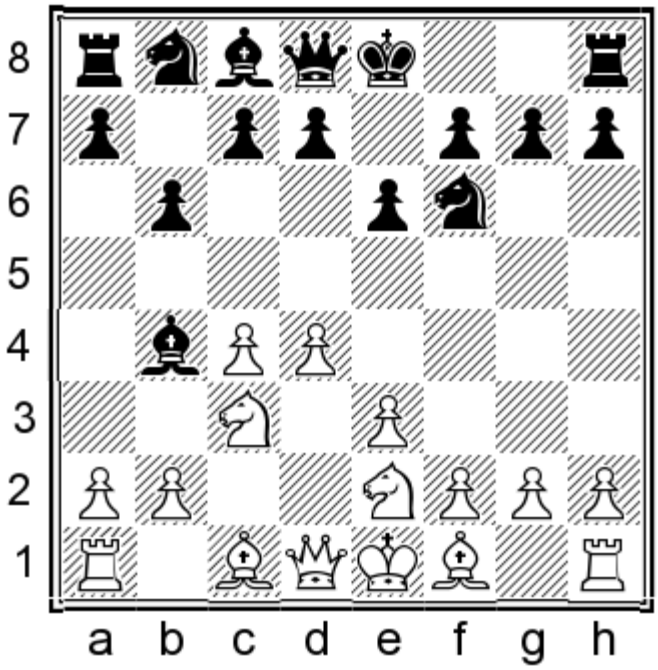
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.e3

The Nimzo with 4.e3 is becoming really popular again. Probably the fact that Gelfand obtained an advantage with it in two games against Anand in the WCC match will also improve the opening's popularity.

4...b6

4...0-0 and 4...c5 are more common moves.

5.♘ge2



5...♗a6

This is the old main line. Harikrishna probably wanted to surprise his opponent, but White was perfectly prepared for it. However, recently, if somebody plays 4...b6 it usually continues with 5...c5 6.a3 ♗a5 7.♖b1 ♘a6 with very sharp lines to follow.

6.♘g3

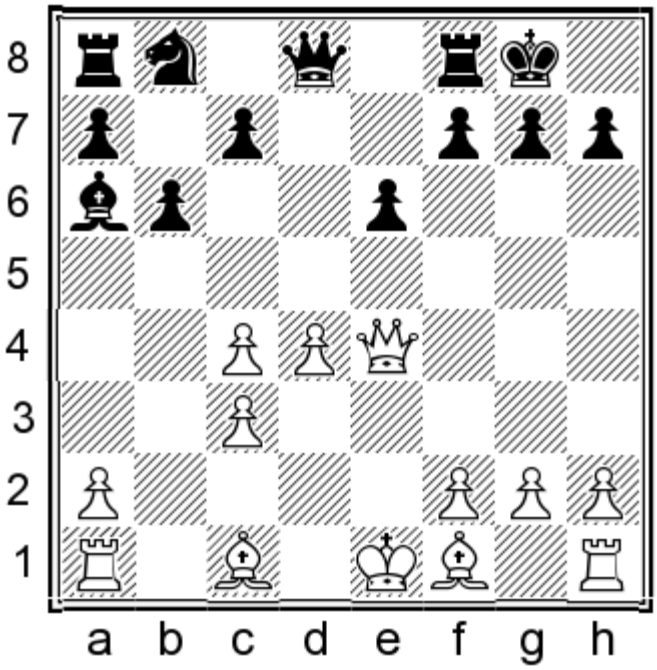
6.a3 is the other way to handle the position in order to keep a healthy pawn structure.

6...♗xc3+ 7.bxc3 d5

This is Black's idea! Otherwise the move ♗a6 loses its point. Black had to take on c3 before playing this move, because of the check on a4. Fischer played a few games in the 60's with this setup.

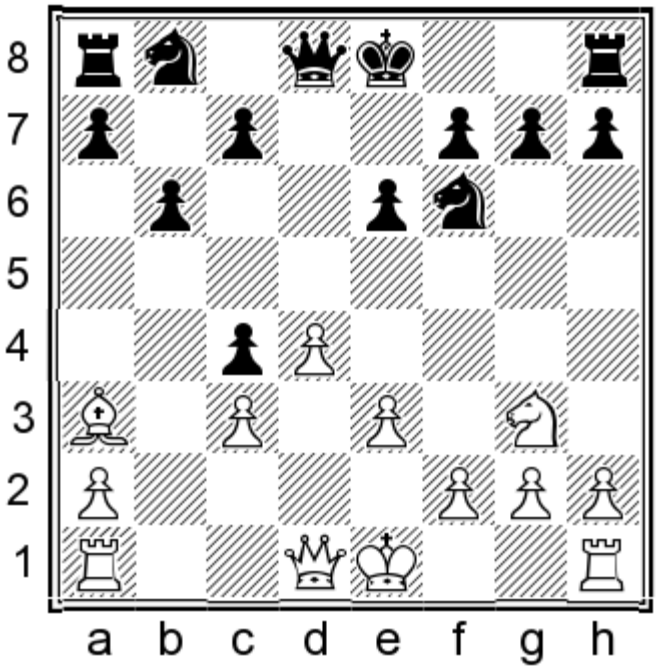
8.♗a3!

The young Vietnamese GM knows the theory well. White prevents 0-0. There was a giant game after the move 8.♕f3 0-0 9.e4 dxe4 10.♘xe4 ♘xe4 11.♕xe4. At this moment, Fischer came up with a fantastic idea.



11...♕d7!! Preparing for the ♘c6-a5 maneuver, launching an immediate attack against the weak doubled pawns. White has a chance to obtain 2 rooks for the queen, but in this case as well the vulnerability of the queenside pawns will tell 12.♗a3 ♖e8 13.♗d3 Developing and forcing some weaknesses before taking the rooks 13...f5 14.♕xa8 ♘c6 15.♕xe8+ ♕xe8 16.0-0 ♘a5! This is the point: White loses a pawn and, in addition, the black knight is going to dominate the a3 bishop 17.♖ae1 ♗xc4 18.♗xc4 ♘xc4 and Black won later in the game Portisch-Fischer, Santa Monica 1966

8...♗xc4 9.♗xc4 dxc4



10.e4!

White tries to make use of the fact that the Black king is still stuck in the center. White could have recaptured the pawn, but this would give Black enough time to solve his opening problems, e.g. 10.♕a4+ ♕d7 11.♕xc4 ♕c6 White has to

exchange the queens and the endgame is about even.

10...♕d7

Black wants to castle queenside and would also like to keep his extra pawn on c4. We are still in theory.

11.0-0 ♕c6?

This is a terrible novelty, which just helps White to initiate an attack against the king. 11...♘c6?! is less exact because of 12.♕e2 ♘a5 13.♗b4, when White is going to win back the pawn and enjoy a comfortable advantage due to his superior pawn formation. 11...♕b5! is definitely the right move, with the idea of ♘c6 and 0-0-0. White must act quickly here with 12.e5! ♘d5 13.♕g4 creating holes in Black's camp, which the knight could seek to exploit from e4 13...g6 14.♘e4 ♘d7 15.♗c1! h6 16.a4 with a complex position. I personally prefer White's position; I think there is more than enough compensation for the pawn.

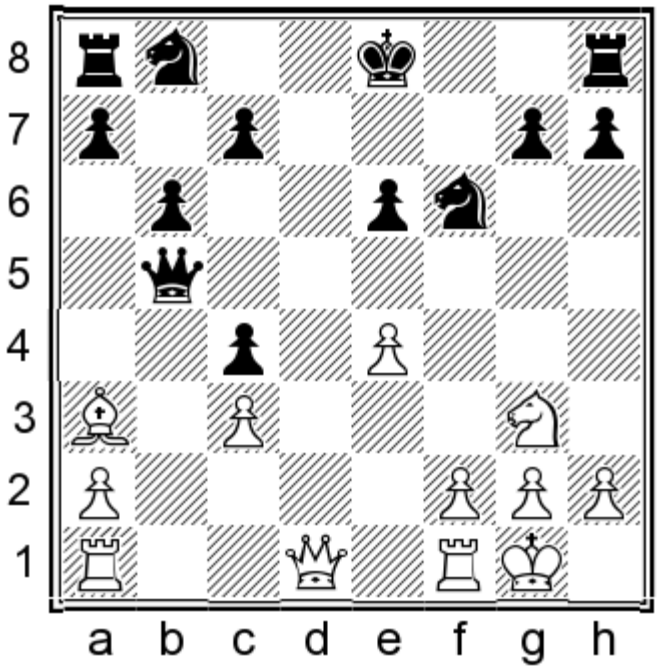
12.d5!

Of course, White opens the position with tempo.

12...♕b5

White has to play energetically, otherwise after ♘bd7 and 0-0-0 Black enjoys an extra pawn. 12...exd5? It would be too optimistic to open the e-file 13.exd5 ♕xd5 14.♕e2+ ♕e6 15.♕f3+- when the rooks are joining the game with a winning attack.

13.dxe6 fxe6



14.e5!

The amount of pawns does not count now! White has to open lines at any cost! Unfortunately for Black he must co-operate with his opponent, because against any moves with the knight, ♕g4 is decisive.

14...♕xe5

14...♘d5 15.♕g4+-

15.♖e1 ♕d5

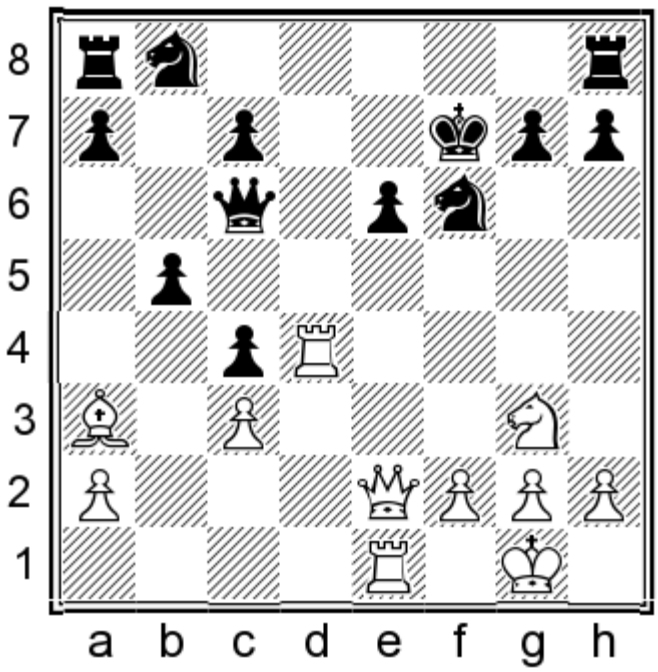
Black defends well, but his mistake on the 11th move was too grave. White cruelly punishes him for that.

16.♕e2!

Of course, White needs the queens for the attack.

16...♘bd7

The logical 16...♔f7 is met by 17.♖ad1 ♕c6 18.♖d4! This is the “key”, which is necessary for the advantage. White brings another piece into the attack 18...b5



(*18...♖e8 19.♖xc4 ♕b7 20.♘e4!+-*)

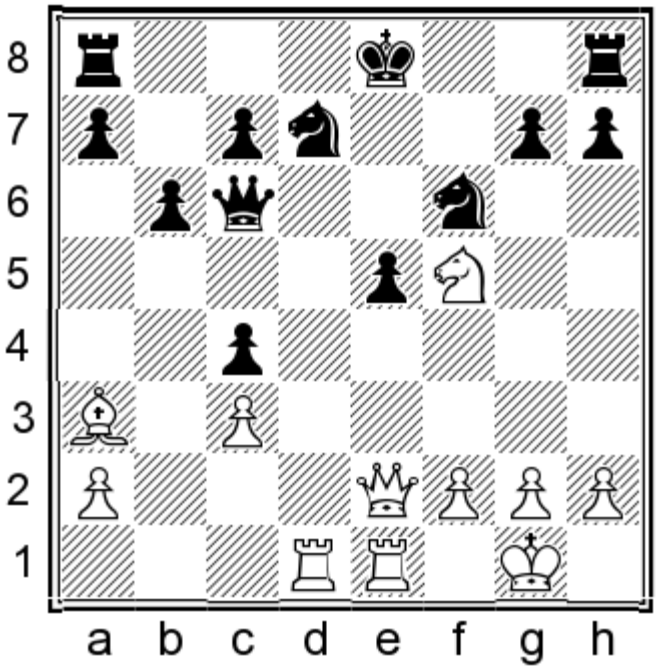
19.♘e4! ♘xe4 20.♖xe4 ♖e8 and here White gets the opportunity for a nice finish with 21.♕f3+ ♔g8 22.♖xe6!+- with mate on f8.

17.♖ad1 ♕c6 18.♘f5!

White creates many different threats (♘xg7, ♘d4, ♘e7) using the fact that Black has no ...0-0-0 due to ♘e7.

18.♕xe6+ ♕xe6 19.♖xe6+ ♔d8 20.♘f5± is also very good, but why exchange queens?!

18...e5



On 18...♔f7 19.♘e7+- is the strongest. Black can not hold the e6 pawn.

19.g4!!

A fantastic move, with a double threat which Black cannot prevent! The obvious threat is g5 and the knight has no good square of escape, while the hidden idea becomes clear in the 19...h6 line.

19...♔f7

19...h6 20.♕xe5+!! A great queen sacrifice! 20...♘xe5 21.♖xe5+ ♔f7 22.♖e7++- followed by ♖xg7 mate. Thanks to the excellent 19.g4!! the knight on f5 is protected.

20.g5 ♖he8

Black preferred to give up the piece, which is basically equal to resignation. 20...♘d5 21.♕f3+-;

20...♘g8 21.♖xd7+ ♕xd7 22.♕xe5+-

21.gxf6 ♘xf6

Black has 3 pawns for the piece, but his pawns are weak and White pieces are placed perfectly.

22.♘e3 b5 23.♘g4 ♘xg4 24.♕xg4 ♖e6 25.♕e4

White simplifies the position to a winning endgame. From now on almost all moves are winning, but Black plays on, because in a team tournament it is an especially bad feeling to resign a game...

25...♕xe4 26.♖xe4 ♖a6 27.♗c5 ♔f6 28.a3 ♔f5 29.f3 ♖g6+ 30.♔f2 c6 31.♖d7 a5 32.♖f7+ ♖f6 33.♖xg7 b4 34.cxb4 axb4 35.♗xb4 c5 36.♗c3 ♖e6 37.♖xc4 ♖xa3 38.♖xh7 ♖a2+ 39.♔e3 ♔g6 40.♖hh4 ♔g5 41.♖h8

Finally Black resigned. A nice attacking game and I especially liked the 19.g4 move with the idea of ♕xe5.

1–0

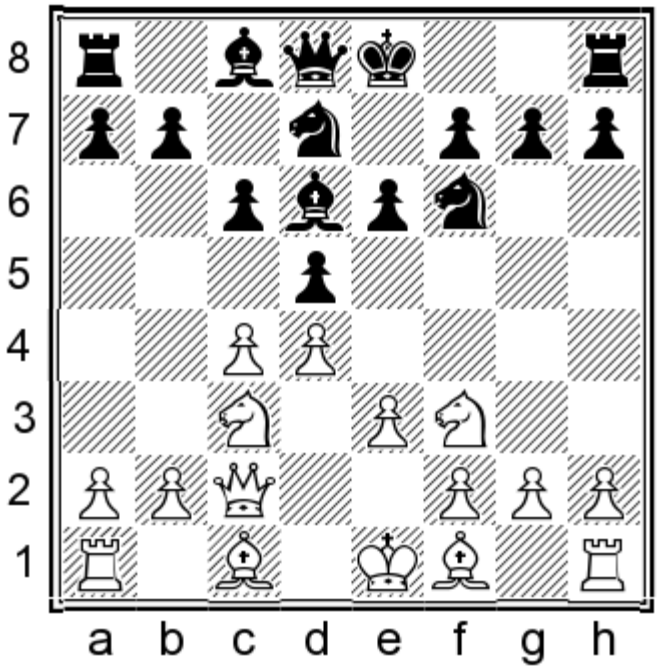
GAME 3
S. Mamedyarov (2726)
K. Shanava (2589)
Tbilisi
09.06.2012, [D45]
Annotated by Balogh Csaba

This game is taken from the Georgia-Azerbaijan friendly match. However, as we will see, the only friendly thing about it is the name — they played really sharp chess! We are presented with a very interesting game, especially knowing the circumstances. Mamedyarov “improved” on his previous game on the 13th move with a dubious novelty, which seemed to be a great bluff, but Black fell right into its beautiful idea. Had Black reacted better, he would have obtained a clear advantage.

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♘f3 e6 5.e3 ♘bd7

The starting position of the Meran. White goes for one of its sharpest lines...

6.♕c2 ♗d6



7.g4!?

This is Mamedyarov’s favorite move, which enjoyed huge popularity around 5-6 years ago, even at the highest level. Recently it went a bit out of fashion, mainly because of strong chess engines suggesting very good ideas for Black. He can choose between many sharp options, and all of them lead to complex positions.

7...dxc4

7...h6 is another move that is considered to be fine for Black. White gets very strong compensation if Black accepts the sacrifice 7...♘xg4 8.♖g1 ♘xh2 9.♘xh2 ♗xh2 10.♖xg7 ♘f8 11.♖g2 ♗d6 12.e4 followed by ♗g5 and 0-0-0. White gets a very strong initiative for the pawn. Black’s pieces are undeveloped and the lines are opening towards the king.

8.g5

8.♗xc4 is just a transposition to the game after 8...e5 9.g5 ♘d5

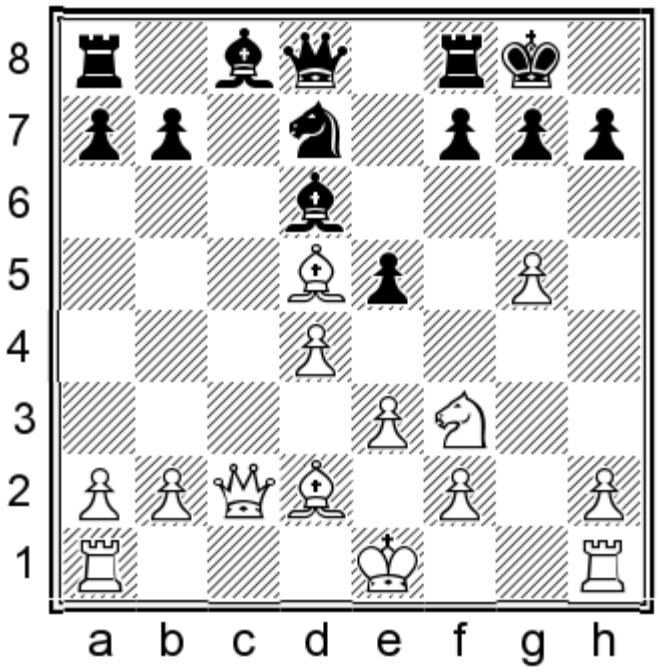
8...♘d5 9.♗xc4 e5

Actually, this is a very logical response. Black opens the center against the attack on the flank.

10.♗d2

Giving up the light-squared bishop for a pawn is not an advisable idea: 10.♗xd5 cxd5 11.♘xd5 0-0 12.♗d2 ♖e8! with the threat of e4. The White king finds himself in trouble. 10.♘xd5? cxd5 11.♗xd5? does not work because of 11...♕a5+

10...0-0 11.♘xd5 cxd5 12.♗xd5



12...exd4

Shanava was well-prepared, since Mamedyarov had a game not so long ago in this theoretical position.

13.♘xd4

White deviates from his previous game, but this is not yet a novelty. 13.♗e4 dxe3 14.♗xe3 ♕a5+ 15.♔f1 (On *15.♗d2* ♗*b4* Black is fine according to the machine.) 15...f5 could be a very strong improvement for Black (probably this was Shanava's idea- *15...♘e5* happened in the game Mamedyarov-Zherebukh, Khanty-Mansiysk 2011.) 16.♕b3+ is probably the best, but still, after 16...♔h8 17.♗d5 f4 18.♗d2 ♕c7 only Black can be better. His pieces are coming out with tempo, first the d7 knight, then the c8 bishop. (*16.♗d3* meets with *16...♘e5 17.♘xe5* ♕*xe5* followed by f4 or the simple ♗e6 and ♖ac8. Black has a big advantage. To open the f-file and the diagonal of the c8 bishop would be a serious mistake *16.gxf6? ♘xf6* with a big attack.)

13...♕xg5 14.♕f5

This is the novelty of the game. White would like to transpose into a superior endgame, but of course Black keeps the queens on the board.

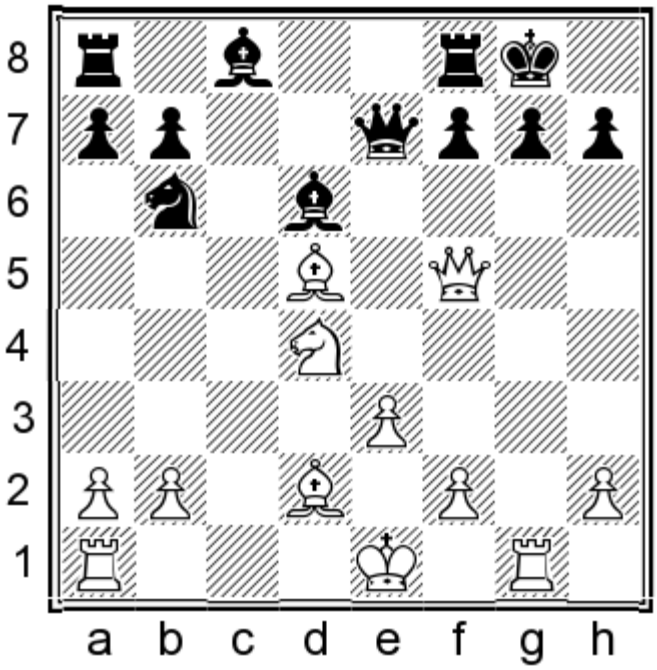
14...♕e7!

14...♕xf5? 15.♘xf5 ♗e5 White wins a pawn after 16.♗b4 ♖d8 17.♘e7+ ♔h8 18.♗xf7±

15.♖g1

A very suspicious move. The White queen is pinned and at first sight Black could immediately make use of it.

15...♘b6



After 15...♗e5 I think, Black has a clear advantage... 16.♕g5 is probably White's best option to go for a worse endgame (*16.♗e4 g6* and the d7 knight jumps in the next move. *16.♗c3 ♘f6*) 16...♕xg5 17.♖xg5 h6 18.♖g1 ♘f6∓

16.♗c3!!

This great queen sacrifice is the start of Mamedyarov's ingenious play, but it was not too late for Black to obtain a good position.

16...♕e5?

Just as in the previous move, Black plays the most logical move. After the shocking 16.♗c3, Black would like to exchange the queens... 16...♗xf5? simply loses after 17.♘xf5 The best that Black can achieve is 17...♕e5 18.♗xe5 ♗xe5 19.♘h6+ ♔h8 20.♘xf7+±;

Just as on the previous move, Black should have played 16...♗e5! 17.♕xe5!! (The elegant *17.♘c6?* would win, if taking on c3 didn't come with check! *17...♗xc3+* and Black takes the knight.) 17...♕xe5 18.♘e2! and Black has nothing better than giving back the queen and simplifying to a drawish endgame 18...♕xc3+ 19.♘xc3 ♘xd5 20.♘xd5 ♗e6 Black is slightly better, but the game should end in a draw.

17.♕d3!!

After this fantastic and completely unexpected move, White is winning. Black cannot neutralize the power of the c3 bishop connected with the threats around the g7 square.

17...♘xd5

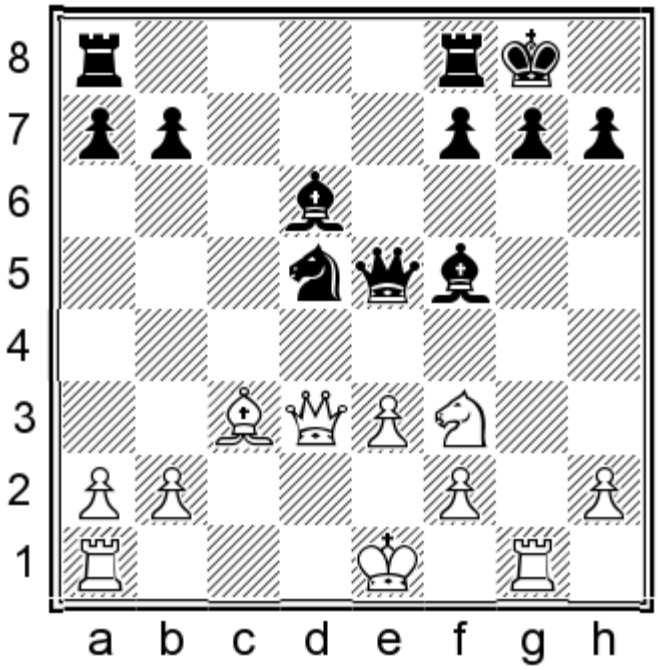
17...g6 18.♗b3! Too many threats are in the air. One of the possible winning sequences could be 18...♕h5 19.♘f3! ♕d4 and ♕xd6 are threats 19...♕xf3 20.♖xg6+! hxg6 21.♕xg6#;

White wins the queen after 17...♕xd5 18.♖xg7+! ♔xg7 19.♘f5+! ♔g6 (*19...♔g8 20.♘h6#*) 20.♘e7++-

18.♘f3!!

The 3rd incredibly strong move in a row, but not the last one. Only with this double attack against the queen can White continue pressing the g7 pawn.

18...♗f5

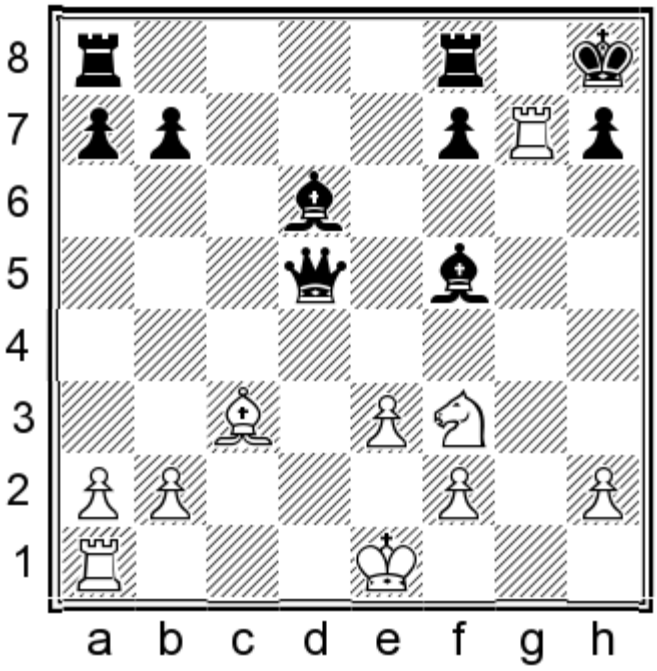


18...♘xc3 19.♘xe5+- On 18...♘f4 White has many different wins, but the nicest is definitely 19.♕xd6!! ♕xd6 20.♖xg7+ ♔h8 21.♖xf7+ ♔g8 22.♖g7+ ♔h8 23.♖g6++-

19.♕xd5!!

This final decisive blow “puts the dot over the i”. White ends up with a material advantage after a forced line.

19...♕xd5 20.♖xg7+ ♔h8



21.♖xf7+!

First, the f-pawn had to be eliminated to avoid the f6 resource.

21...♗e5

21...♔g8 22.♖g7+ ♔h8 23.♖g5+ ♗e5 24.♘xe5! is the most precise way to win 24...♖f6 25.♘d7!!+-

22.♗xe5+ ♔g8 23.♖g7+ ♔h8 24.♖g5+

Maybe Black could have continued a bit longer two pawns down, but he was so impressed with White's play that he resigned immediately.

1–0

GAME 4
L. Aronian (2825)
L. McShane (2703)
Tal Memorial (3)
10.06.2012, [D15]
Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

Now we will look at an amazing game! I can't remember Aronian being crushed in the opening like this before! It is the 3rd round of the Tal Memorial, McShane starting with a double 00, and Aronian with a solid 1.5/2. Not many would have put money on a victory by the talented Englishman, but things strayed far from what was expected!

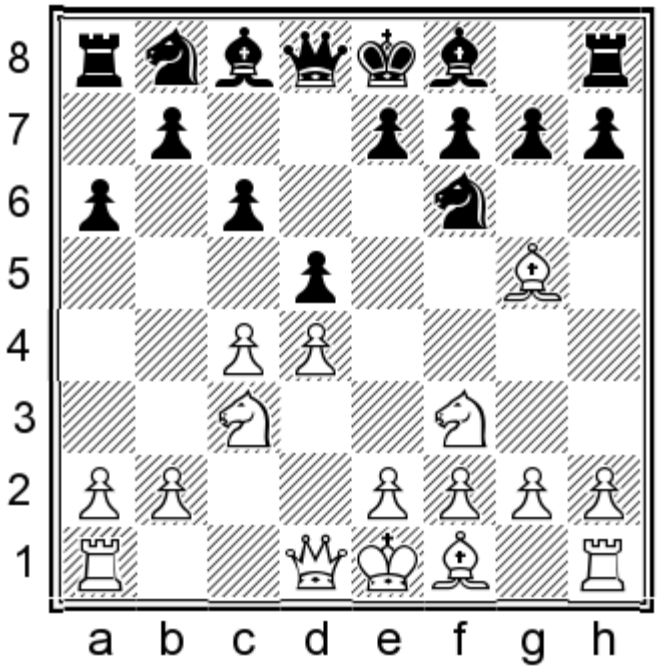
1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.c4 c6 4.♘c3

And we have another game in the Slav.

4...a6

McShane chooses a very solid line with a6.

5.♗g5



5.e3 is the main move in the position.

5...dxc4!?

McShane is heading for the most forcing line! Strangely, after 5...dxc4 almost no games were played at the highest level, so it's hard to say if Aronian knew this move or not; maybe he knew it and made a mistake in the variation?! 5...♘e4 and 5...e6 would be the other 2 main possibilities.

6.a4

6.e4 b5 and we are back to the usual unclear positions that appear in a lot of lines, where Black takes on c4 and protects it with b5. White will develop his play in the center, while Black will try to stay solid.

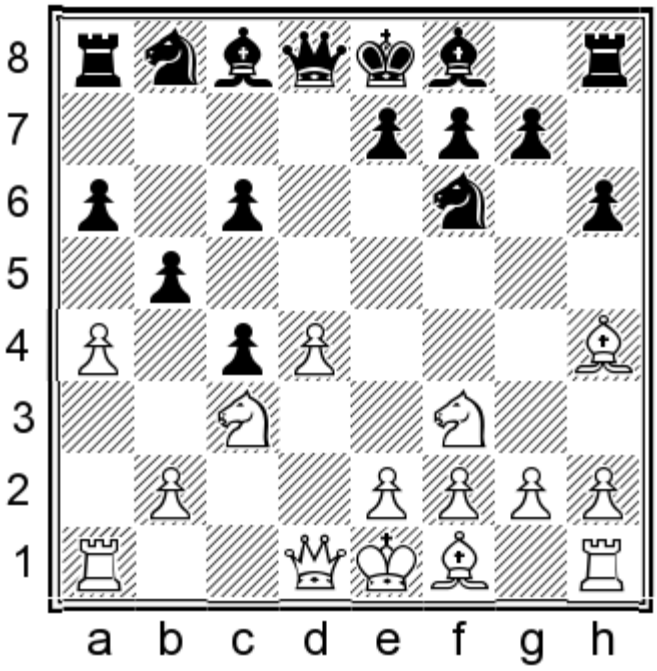
6...h6!

A very important move that will be extremely helpful to Black shortly. White needs to decide what to do with the bishop on g5.

7.♗h4

The most natural reply. 7.♗xf6 exf6 These positions can never be better for White even if he manages to recover the pawn on c4. Black's bishop pair will always give enough counterplay! 7.♗d2 Can this be the right move?! 7.♗d2 looks plain ugly. Why did White play 5.♗g5?

7...b5!



I don’t know if McShane knew this idea or just found it over the board, in any case, it’s a very strong move.

8.axb5

This move is a clear sign of huge self-confidence from the White player. It was still not too late to switch to moves like 8.e4 with quite an unclear position.

8...cxb5 9.♘xb5 axb5!

Otherwise, White is doing much better.

10.♖xa8 ♗b7

Can it be that Black is already better after just 10 moves?... Amazing!

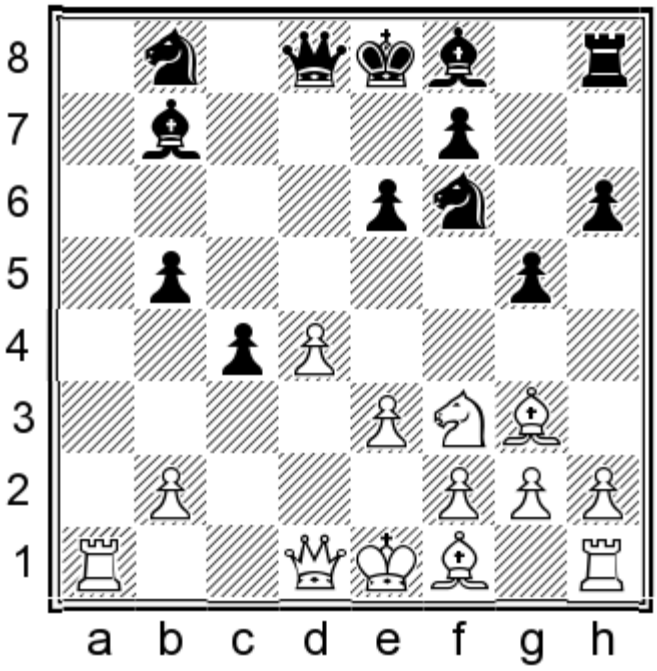
11.♖a1?!

11.♖a7 would achieve nothing for White 11...♕b6 12.♕a1 e6 and White is not in time for ♕a5. 11.♖a2!? Maybe this move would have been a better option for White. The rook on a1 will be under attack (♘a5-♘b3), so why not put it on a2?

11...g5!?

And here we see why 6...h6 was such an important move. Anyway, after 11...e6 12.♗xf6 ♗b4+ 13.♘d2 ♕xf6 14.e3 0-0 it seems like Black has more than enough compensation for the exchange. His next move could be e6-e5.

12.♗g3 e6 13.e3



White doesn’t have any other defense against the ♗b4 threat.

13...♗b4+ 14.♔e2

White’s position looks very ugly. For just an exchange Black has managed to put the White king on e2 in front of the bishop on f1 (I can’t remember seeing this kind of lack of connection before at the highest level) the Black pawn structure is just great and all his pieces are well placed. All Black needs to do is to open some extra lines and the game will be over.

14...♘c6

A good choice, McShane brings his knight to b3 where it will be perfectly placed!

15.♘e1

White is trying to develop his pieces a little bit, at least. White’s idea is to play ♘c2 forcing the ♗b4 to go away and then develop by playing ♔e1–♗e2. But this plan looks very slow — in fact, too slow...

15...♘a5 16.♗e5?!

This move probably already leads to big trouble. Much better was: 16.♘c2 ♗e7 17.f3! A very logical move. White blocks Black from playing ♘e4 and, at the same time, the White king will finally find a more-or-less safe square on f2 17...0-0 18.♔f2 ♘d5 Black wants to play f5-f4. The position is quite complicated but we can feel that it should be very nice to play for Black, even if a lot of engines might probably disagree.

16...0-0!

No time to waste, Black needs to play actively.

17.h4

17.♗xf6 would not solve White’s problems 17...♕xf6 18.♘c2 ♘c6 Black is still very active and White has horrible

development. I would prefer to play Black here. (*18...♕e7?! 19.♘xb4 ♕xb4 20.♕c2!*)

17...g4

It's hard to say if the inclusion of 17.h4-g4 is good for White — probably not. Aronian is a very optimistic player and I am sure that in the current position he was not thinking about "how to escape today?" but instead "how to trick my opponent?".

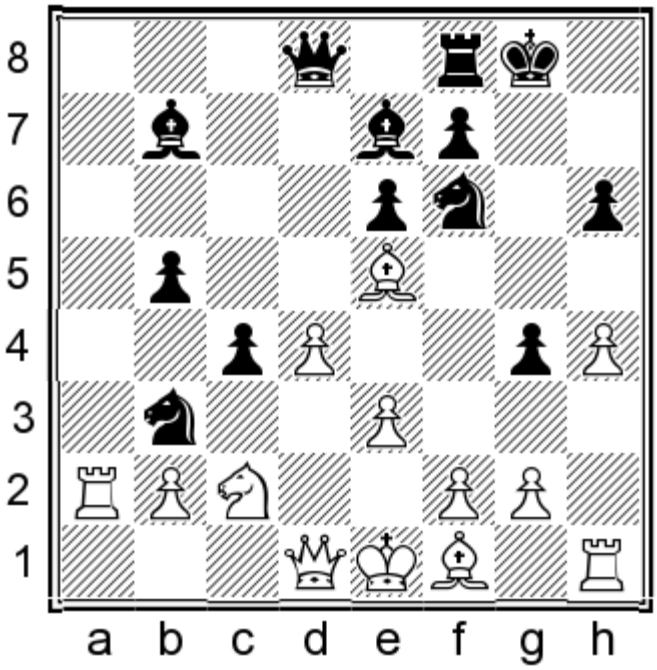
18.♘c2 ♗e7

Of course there is no reason for Black to give away the bishop on b4.

19.♔e1 ♘b3!

McShane is playing a great game. 19...h5 would have been possible as well.

20.♖a2



On 20.♖a7 ♕b6 White would have no better move than to come back to a2.

20...h5

Looks like an easy move, and in fact it is! White is slowly getting into deep trouble. Black's pieces keep on rolling forward, and it's hard to say how to stop them!

21.♗e2

White is trying to develop anything he can, but it is too late!

21...♗d6!

Another great move by Black. White only has one active piece, so it is time to exchange it! There is no reason for Black to even look at 21...♗xg2, which would give White some play on the g-file. Black has to stick to the main idea: to play

for domination. McShane is doing it perfectly!

22.f3

White is trying to create something... 22.♗xd6 ♕xd6 and White simply has no moves!

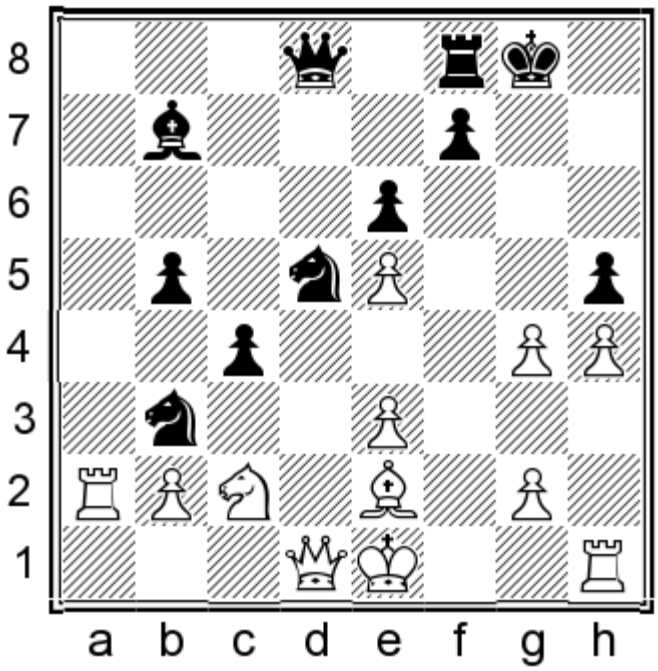
22...♘d5

McShane sees it clearly; after 22.f3 the weakness is the pawn on e3!

23.fxg4

Maybe this move is already losing, but what else to do? White is trying to search for chances with his active play. 23.♗xd6 ♕xd6 24.♔f2 f5 and White's position simply looks horrible.

23...♗xe5! 24.dxe5



24...♕b6

White is helpless against the Black threats. Black wants to play ♘xe3, or ♖d8, winning the Queen on d1. The White rook on a2 is totally out of the game.

25.♗f3

If 25.♖h3 ♖d8 White has no defense against ♘f4: 26.gxh5 ♘f4.

25...♘xe3?!

This move gives White some hope. 25...♖d8! would have been the correct play, and it is a bit strange that McShane got away from his main idea 26.♗xd5 White has no other move... In case of 26.♕e2 then ♘c1 wins the rook on a2 26...♖xd5 27.♕f3 ♖d2 and White's position is lost.

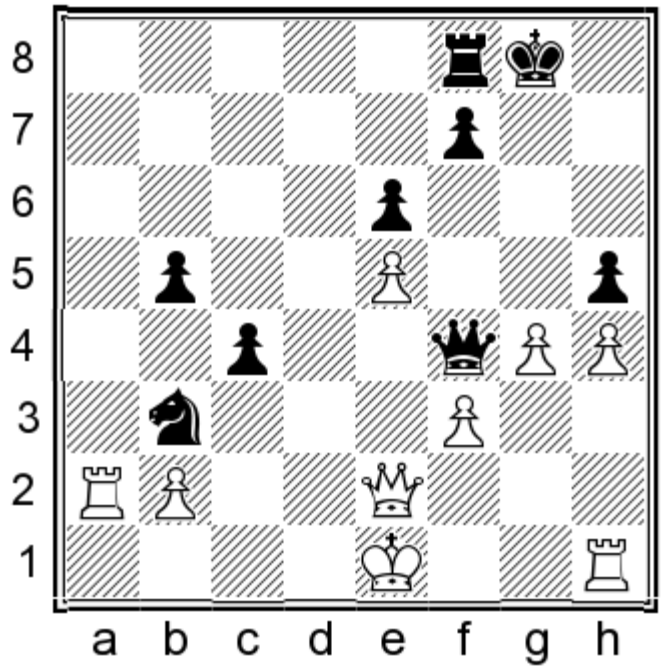
26.♘xe3 ♕xe3+ 27.♕e2 ♕c1+ 28.♕d1 ♕e3+ 29.♕e2 ♕c1+

Probably Black was in time trouble and decided to repeat the moves.

30.♕d1 ♗xf3!

Of course, continuing the game. White's position is still very, very bad.

31.gxf3 ♕e3+ 32.♕e2 ♕c1+ 33.♕d1 ♕e3+ 34.♕e2 ♕f4

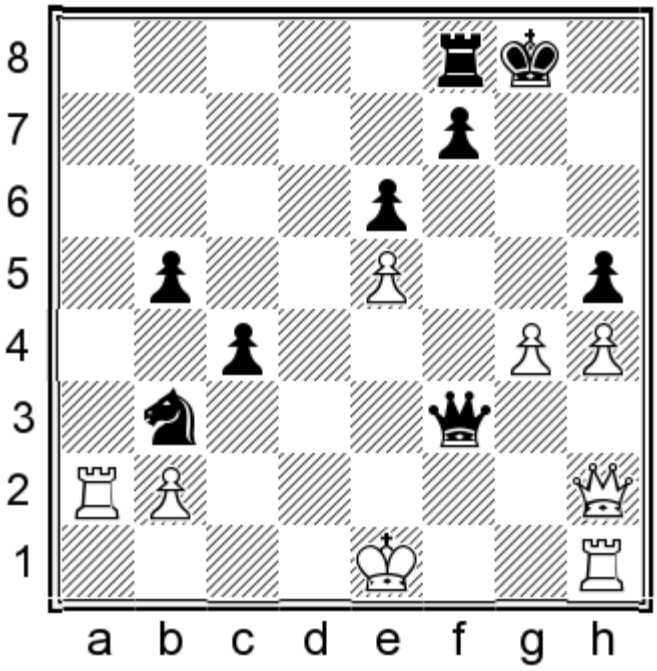


Black wants to play ♖d8 next. The White king is still in the center, and the rook on a2 is always in danger of getting caught!

35.♕h2

35.♔f2 would have been a better way to fight, but here also Black is close to winning 35...♖d8 36.♖d1 ♕h2+ 37.♔e3 ♕xe5+ 38.♔f2 ♕h2+ 39.♔e3 ♕xh4! Black got 2 pawns for the exchange, and probably the knight on b3 is worth more than the rook on a2. The position should be winning for Black.

35...♕xf3!



As Kasparov once said, greediness is a positive characteristic in a chess player.

36.♖f1 ♕e4+ 37.♔f2 ♘d2 38.♖g1 ♕f3+

White resigns because of 39.♔e1 ♕e3! What a game by McShane — I think he will not forget it soon. The same goes for the World's Number 2 — this was Aronian's toughest loss in maybe a couple of years...

0–1

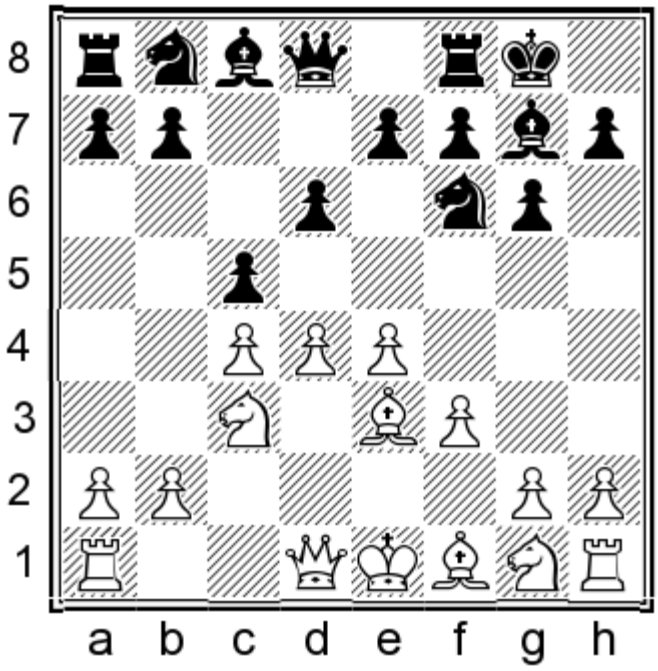
GAME 5
N. Vitiugov (2703)
L. Ding (2680)
8th RUS-CHN Summit Men Classical St Petersburg RUS (1)
02.07.2012, [E81]
Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

This is the first game of what has become almost a traditional yearly training match between Russia and China. We'll see a nice and typical attacking game by White. This is a good example of what Black should clearly avoid...

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.f3

Lately, a few Russian players have started playing 5.f3 against the King's Indian. We can see a lot of games by Tomashevsky and Vitiugov in this line. Maybe they work together!?

5...0-0 6.♗e3 c5

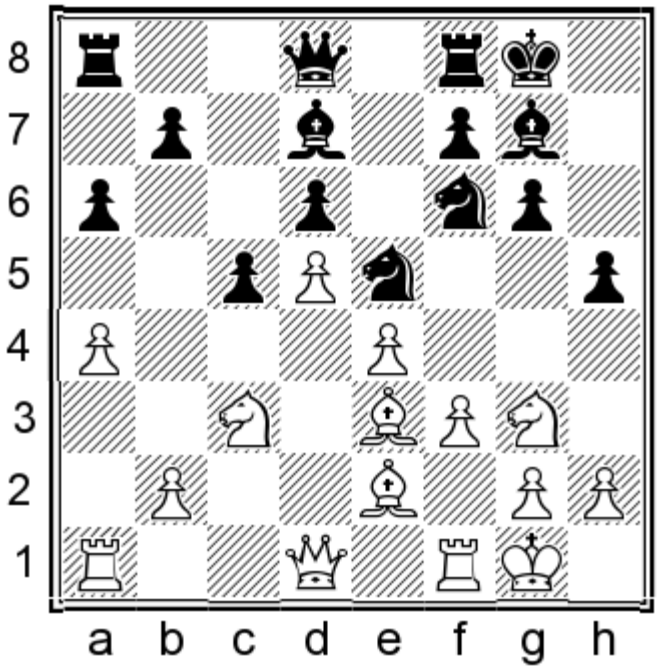


7.♘ge2

7.dxc5 dxc5 8.♕xd8 ♖xd8 9.♗xc5 ♘c6 10.♘ge2 ♘d7 11.♗a3 with a fighting position. 7.d5 are the other 2 main moves here 7...e6 8.♕d2

7...b6

To be honest, this move looks a bit strange to me. White wanted to play d5 anyway, and it's not clear how the pawn on b6 helps Black. Also, the knight on b8 doesn't look great at all, especially if we compare it to the 7...♘c6 8.d5 ♘e5 line, where it takes up a central position. 7...♘c6 8.d5 ♘e5 9.♘g3 a6 10.a4 e6 11.♗e2 exd5 12.cxd5 h5 13.0-0 ♗d7



14.♘h1!? This is the game Vitiugov-Cheparinov from the ECC 2012, where after some sharp play White managed to

get the advantage and win the game. A few more moves of this exciting fight: 14...b5 15.♘f2 b4 16.♘b1 c4 17.♗d4 ♖c8 18.♘d2 c3 19.bxc3 bxc3 20.♘b3 ♘c4 21.♕c2 The c-pawn is blocked and the bishop on d4 is standing very well; White is doing clearly better.

8.d5

A very logical move, why not to take the center if you can...

8...e6 9.♘f4

White switches from the usual 9.♘g3. In case of the logical 9.♘g3 then 9...♘a6!? and maybe this was Black's main idea when he played 7...b6. Now the Black knight goes to c7, where it can support the b5-push. 10.♗d3 exd5 11.cxd5 ♘c7 12.a4 a6 13.0-0 ♗d7 followed by b5. In my opinion, White should be doing better anyway.

9...exd5

Black has to act. If White gets 2 more moves, he would play ♗d3 and 0-0 and Black's position could become clearly worse.

10.♘fxd5

Of course White takes on d5 with a knight, using the fact that Black can't play 10...♘xd5 11.♕xd5! because the rook on a8 would fall.

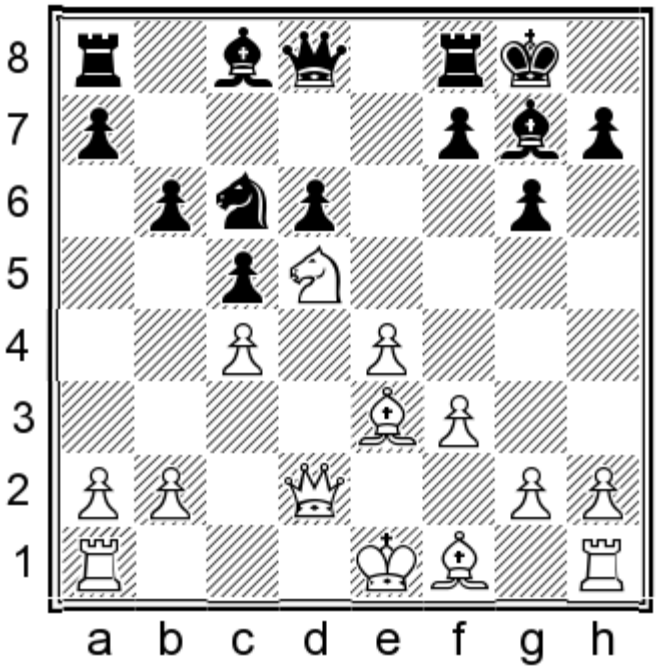
10...♘c6

White has only one weakness in his structure, the d4 square. So, of course, Black is going to make use of it and place his knight there.

11.♕d2

This move is a play against Black's ...♘xd5 as now the pawn on b2 is not hanging anymore.

11...♘xd5 12.♘xd5



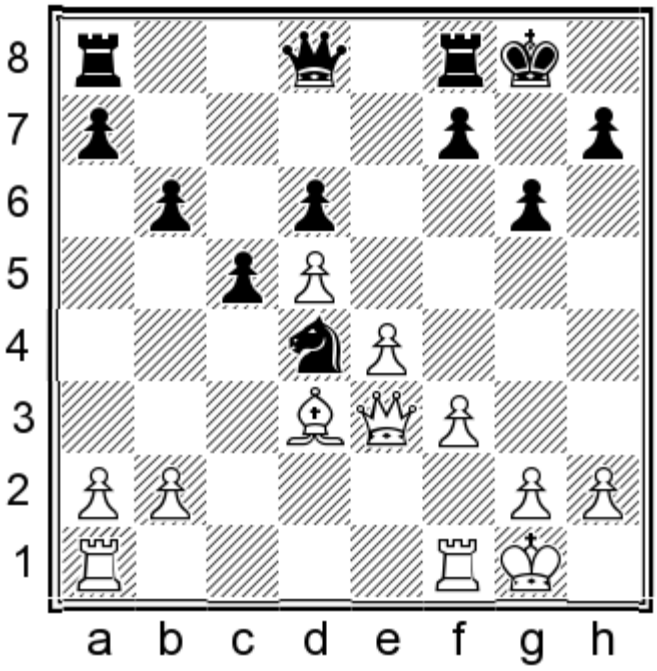
It’s hard to say who is doing better here. Probably White has a very small advantage, but the position is very playable for both sides. From this moment on, Black starts making “positional” mistakes that lead to a deadly attack against his king.

12...♗e6

Why not 12...f5!? This move looks much more logical to me. Black uses his better development and starts to play actively. 13.♗g5 White has many different moves here, but the position is very complicated. 13...♕d7 14.exf5 ♕xf5 15.0-0-0 and we are in a very sharp and complicated position.

13.♗d3 ♗xd5?

This move is a serious positional mistake. It looks like Black will have a huge knight on d4, but this gives White too much play on the kingside. Black had clearly better options: 13...♗d4!? At first sight, this is a strange-looking move, but also quite a tricky one. In case of the logical 14.0-0 ♗xd5! 15.cxd5 ♗xe3+ 16.♕xe3 ♘d4



Black gets a fantastic position! The bishop on g7 was exchanged for the e3-bishop, which is great. Now nothing can move the knight from d4 and all of White attacking chances on the kingside are not as effective without the bishops on the board. From a practical point of view, I would probably choose Black here. 13...b5!? This tactical option is a good choice as well. 14.cxb5 ♗xd5 forcing White to take on d5 with the e-pawn, which is usually good for Black. 15.exd5

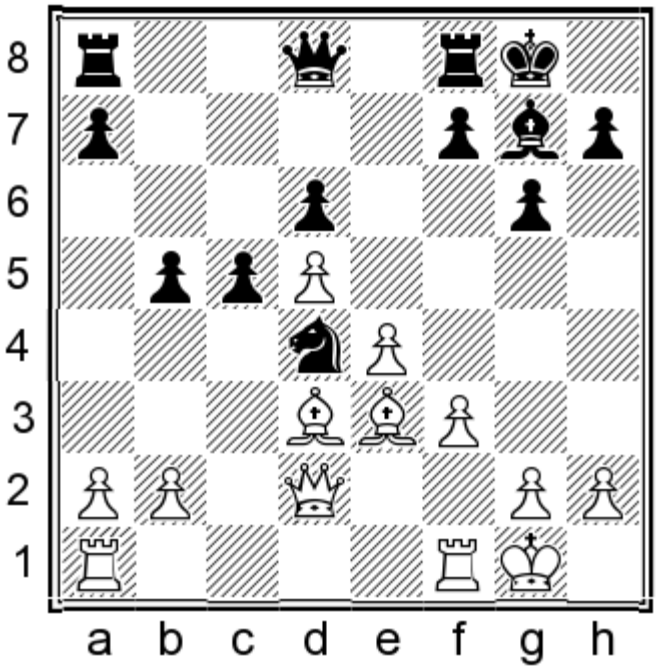
(*15.bxc6 ♗xc6* looks like an equal position to me.)

15...♘e5! This is the key move! Not so easy to see during a practical game. In case of 16.0-0 ♘xd3 17.♕xd3 ♗xb2 or 17...♖e8 first, Black is totally fine. 16.♗e2 It seems like White has defended everything, but... 16...♘c4! Black uses the unfortunate position of the White king on e1. A nice tactical trick. 17.♗xc4 ♕h4+ 18.g3 ♕xc4 and only Black can be better here.

14.cxd5 ♘d4 15.0-0

Now White's plan is clear: attack the Black king. Black's plan is clear as well: try to create something on the queenside while not getting mated.

15...b5?!



Black clearly underestimates his opponent’s plan. It was time to think about how to stop White from playing f4-f5. 15...f5!? This move is not as good as it was before, but it still leads to a slightly unclear position. Probably White is doing a bit better and can continue with 16.♔h1 threatening to play ♗xd4 and exf5 next, but the game remains quite unclear.

16.♔h1

White is preparing the deadly f4-f5 push.

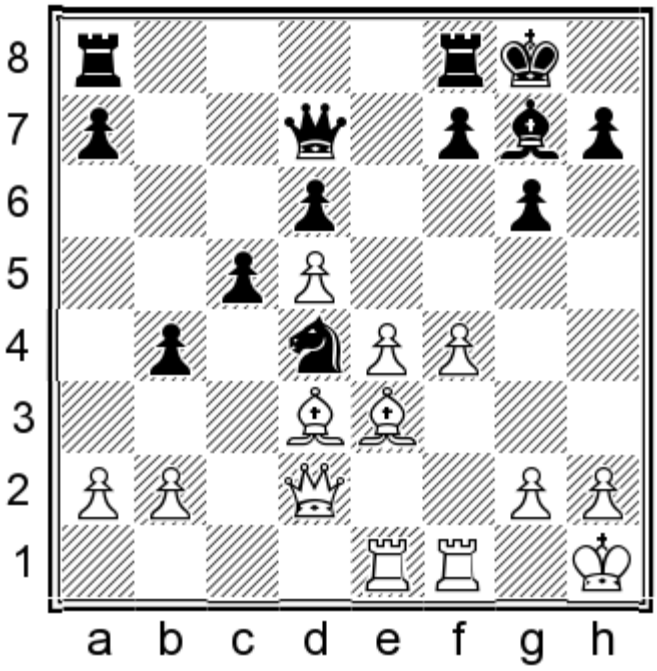
16...♕d7 17.♖ae1!

There is no need to hurry. Black’s play on the queenside is clearly too slow. 17.f4?! The right move, but in this unprepared version, it doesn’t work that well. 17...f5! Black cannot allow White to play f5. 18.♗xd4 ♗xd4 19.exf5 gxf5 20.♖ae1 ♖ae8 and Black is just in time to stop White from playing ♖e6. The position might be a bit better for White, but it’s nothing special, and the game would probably end in a draw.

17...b4?

This move is a serious mistake. 17...♖ae8! Black prepares to counter White’s f4 with f5. 18.b4!± This strong positional move gives White a clear advantage. Black’s central pawns look shaky, and White’s f4 move might become very dangerous now.

18.f4!



Finally!

18...h5

It’s difficult to give advice in such a bad position. 18...f5 doesn’t work 19.♗xd4! ♗xd4 20.exf5 gxf5 21.♖e6! and White is in time to put the rook on e6, which almost gives him a winning position. If Black tries to “do nothing”, say with 18...a5 then 19.f5 ♗e5 20.f6 would also lead to a very bad position.

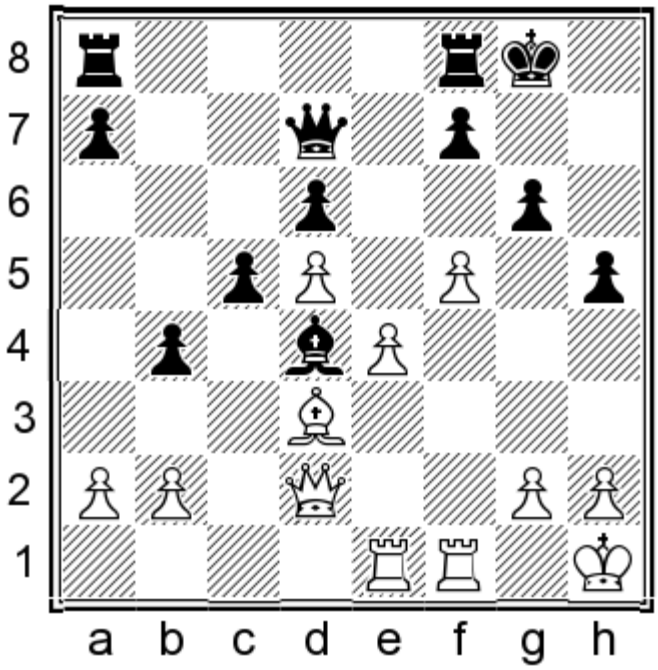
19.f5

White wants to play f6.

19...♗e5 20.♗xd4!

It’s never nice to give up such a bishop, but this move seems to win by force.

20...♗xd4



Now White can show his tactical skills. In the event of 20...cxd4 21.♖f3 White is going to mate the poor Black king with all his pieces. It's hard to imagine how Black would survive this.

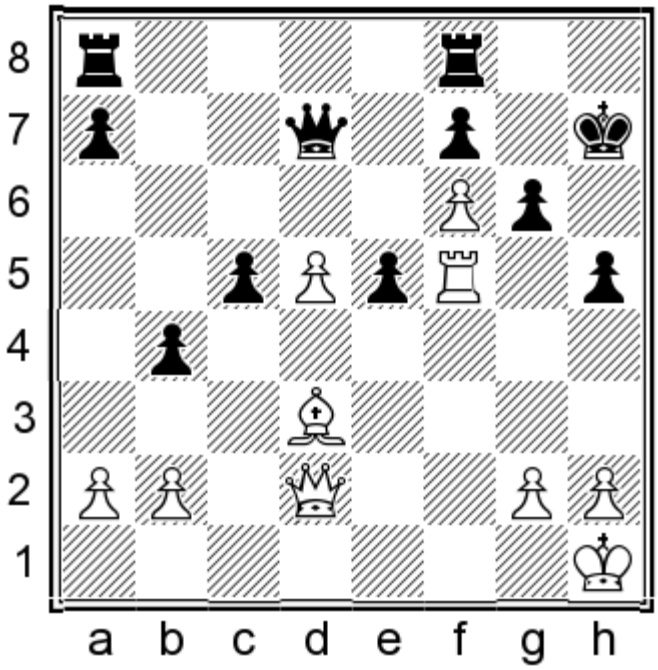
21.e5!

A small and pretty final combination.

21...♗xe5 22.♖xe5 dxe5 23.f6

White wants to play ♕h6.

23...♔h7 24.♖f5!



A beautiful final move! White is mating Black; in case of 24...gxf5 then 25.♕g5 mate. Here we saw quite an instructive game where Black played badly and White played well. Let’s hope that we don’t make the same mistakes that the Chinese player Ding Liren made.

1–0

GAME 6
V. Kramnik (2799)
G. Meier (2644)
40th Dortmund GER (9)
22.07.2012, [A16]
Annotated by Balogh Csaba

We are facing a spectacular victory by Kramnik from the final round. There is an amusing aspect to the opening as the same position might arise after 3 completely different move orders.

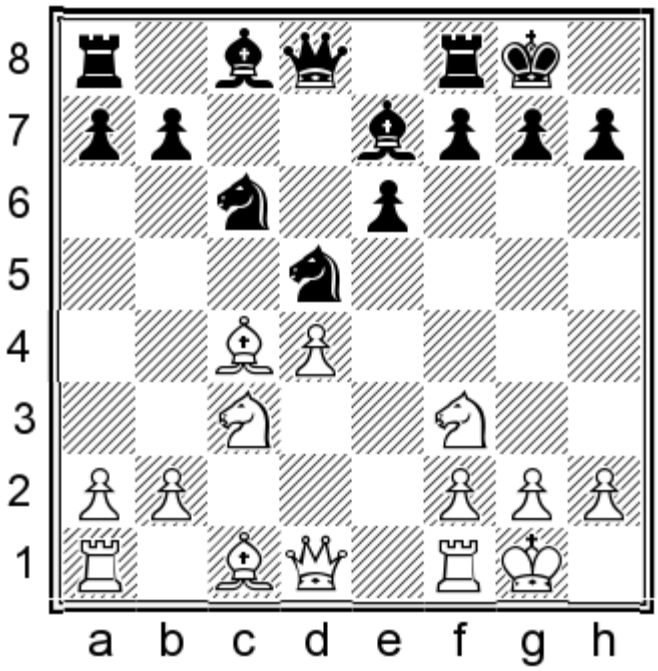
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 c5 5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.e3 ♘c6 7.♗c4 cxd4 8.exd4 ♗e7;

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 e6 6.♘f3 ♗e7 7.cxd5 ♘xd5 8.♗c4 ♘c6

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 c5 3.♘f3 e6 4.e3 ♘c6 5.d4 d5 6.cxd5 ♘xd5 7.♗c4 cxd4 8.exd4 ♗e7

Here we are! :)

9.0-0 0-0



10.♖e1

This is the starting position of the line where we have a typical middlegame with the d4 isolani. Both sides have their own plans: White is generally aiming for active piece-play in order to compensate for the d4 weakness, while Black wants to finish his development and secure a safe blockade on the d5 square, in order to avoid White from getting rid of it with a d4-d5 push. In general, any kind of piece exchange that doesn't alter the pawn structure favors Black, because then he can more comfortably organize his play against the d4 pawn. He does not need to worry about different kinds of active counterplay. Black has many different setups, but practice gives preference to two of them.

10...♗f6

Black has two ideas after this move. One is to quickly put pressure on the d4 pawn with ♘de7 and an occasional ♘f5 (of

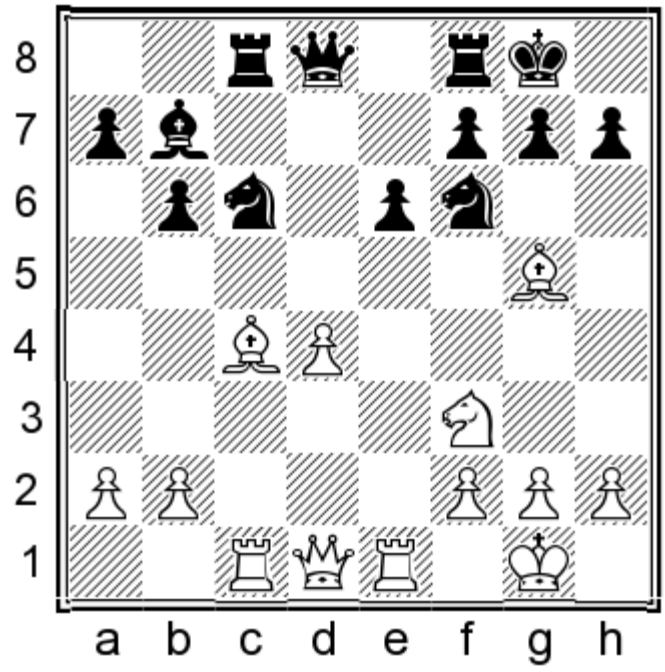
course in this case he must deal with the d5 push), or to develop with ♘ce7 and b6-♗b7. The move's disadvantage is that it gives White the opportunity to obtain the bishop pair with ♘e4, taking the strong bishop. However, Black believes in the principle mentioned above (all exchanges favor him). 10...♘f6 11.a3 b6 is the alternative.

11.♗b3

A very rare and tricky move by Kramnik, who definitely wanted to get his opponent out of his preparation. There was a fresh high-level game in the main line: 11.♘e4 b6 12.♘xf6+

(*12.♗xd5 exd5 13.♘xf6+* ♕*xf6* is nothing.)

12...♘xf6 13.♗g5 ♗b7 14.♖c1 ♖c8



15.♖c3 Both sides have developed logically and here comes a typical re-grouping that we should remember. 15...♘e7! Of course, the move is obvious, but the point is that Black shouldn't worry about ♗xf6 gxf6, because if White is not able to launch a concrete attack, it only improves Black's position. 16.♗b3

(*16.♗xf6 gxf6*)

16...♕d6 17.♘e5 We were following the game Tomashevsky-Sasikiran from Sochi 2012, and here Black should have continued with 17...♖xc3 This move solves the problem of the d4 pawn, but creates another weakness on c3. The fact that he can exchange a few more minor pieces is more important for Black. 18.bxc3 ♘e4!= gaining comfortable equality. 19.♕f3 f6!

11...♘de7!

Meier chose the right plan! 11...♘ce7 is the other plan, but here Kramnik probably prepared a very strong idea. 12.♘e4 b6 13.♘e5! ♗b7 14.♕g4! This is how White should play, activity is very important for him. The idea is ♗g5 which can't really be prevented. 14...♘g6 15.♗g5! ♘xe5 (*15...♗xg5 16.♘xg5* and the knights are looking very dangerous.) 16.dxe5 ♗xg5 17.♘xg5 and White achieves an advantage. He has kept his attacking possibilities, but the d6 square is more important, where the White knight is heading. It's going to become really annoying there. It's important to note that after 11...b6 Black seriously weakens his queenside if he can't take back on d5 with a piece. 12.♘xd5! exd5 13.♘e5. Thanks to the b6 weakness, White has a small but stable advantage. Later, ♗a4 and ♖c1 may come, the knight has no stability on c6, while taking on e5 improves White's pawn structure. There is also no point in putting the bishop

on b7 anymore.

12.♗f4!?

This involves a very deep pawn sacrifice with long-term positional compensation! I don't think this gives any advantage but, as we will see, the shocking effect brought Kramnik a nice point. Black must accept the pawn. I think both captures are possible and good, but it's hard to choose between them. On 12.♗e3 ♘f5 Black is fine.

12...♗xd4

Meier prefers to have a knight on d4, which cannot be disturbed by ♘b5, but on the other hand, it gives up the bishop pair. On 12...♘xd4 White has two options: 13.♘xd4

(If 13.♘e4 here, Black should take the correct piece. 13...♘xb3! to make the d5 square safer for the knight.

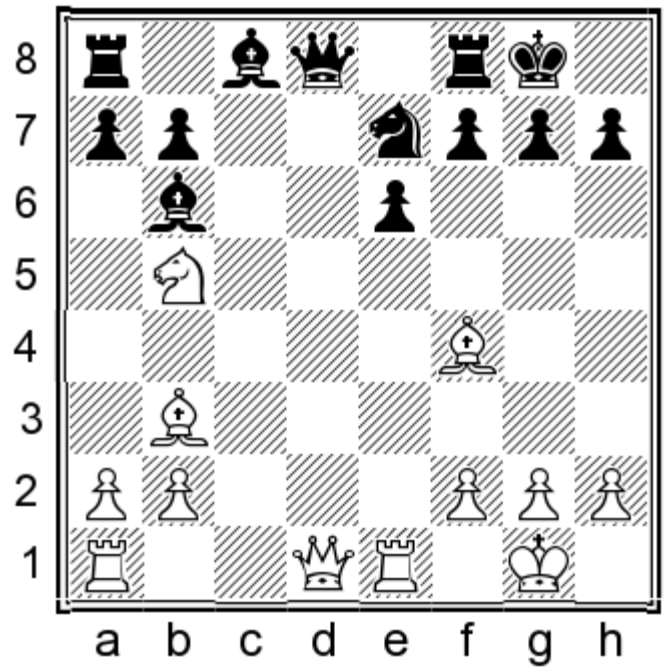
(*13...♘xf3+ 14.♕xf3* White gets more than enough compensation here. For instance *14...♗xb2 15.♖ad1 ♘d5* loses to *16.♖d2!* and the bishop has no good square. *16...♗f6 17.♗xd5 exd5 18.♖xd5!*+- White wins.)

14.♘xf6+ gxf6 15.♕xb3 ♔h8! to prevent the mating ideas with ♗h6 and ♕g3, followed by ♘d5. Black is fine.)

13...♗xd4

(*13...♕xd4* is a bit scary, but also possible. *14.♕xd4 ♗xd4 15.♗d6 ♖e8 16.♗a4 ♘c6 17.♘b5* The White pieces are becoming dangerous. *17...♗b6* Black holds onto his extra pawn. White will retreat his bishop from d6 to free the square for the knight, but the compensation should only be enough for a draw.)

14.♘b5 ♗b6



15.♕f3 Meier might have been afraid of something like this, which seems really dangerous to the human eye, but the machine, as usual, shows great defensive possibilities. 15...♗d7! 16.♖ad1 ♘g6! 17.♗g3 It looks like Black can't survive the pins, but 17...♕e7!! and Black sacrifices an exchange for activity and an attack. 18.♗d6 ♗c6!! 19.♕g3

(*19.♗xe7 ♗xf3 20.♗xf8 ♗xd1*∓)

19...♕f6 20.♗xf8 ♖xf8 21.♘d6 h5 with a huge attack. Both bishops are pressing, the knight will also join via f4, and h4 is the concrete threat. White is in trouble.

13.♘xd4 ♘xd4 14.♗c4!

This is really calm play. White preserves his two bishops. This shows the depth of Kramnik's idea; he gives up a pawn and then just continues the game like nothing happened.

14...♘ec6

Black wants to maintain his d4 knight. 14...♘g6 was also possible 15.♗g3

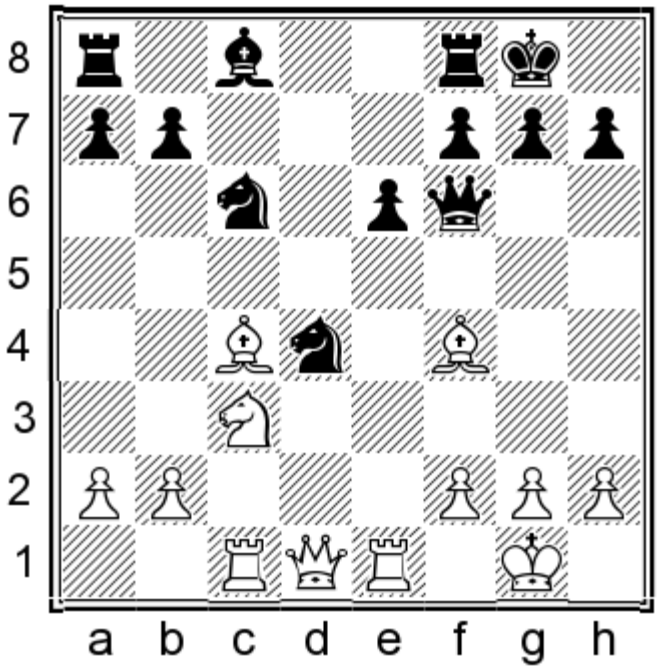
(*15.♗e3* leads to draw. I don't believe this was Kramnik's desire. *15...e5 16.♗xd4 ♕xd4 17.♕xd4 exd4 18.♘b5 ♗d7 19.♘xd4=*)

15...b6 and Black tries to finish his development.

15.♖c1!

Maintaining the calm approach and bringing the final missing piece to the game.

15...♕f6!



Trying to force a draw with 15...e5 leads almost to equality, but 16.♗xe5 ♘xe5 17.♖xe5 ♘c6 18.♖e1 and White still can press a little bit because his pieces are more active.

16.♗c7!

To prevent ♖d8.

16...e5?

A very tempting move, but Kramnik was ready to counter it, thanks to the ♘d5 tempo. White can initiate concrete play to open the position. 16...♕e7 Black should have brought his rook to d8 first. 17.♗g3 ♖d8 18.♕h5 ♘f5! Trying to take the bishop and also to prevent the ♗h4 ideas. 19.♗f4 White must keep his main trump. 19...♗d7! Black finally manages to connect his rooks, and after 20.♗g5 he manages to consolidate his position. 20...f6 21.♗f4 ♘cd4 with a complex position, but Black's chances are not worse.

17.♘d5! ♕g5

The only square to defend the e5 pawn from.

18.f4!

There was no more time for calm moves as Black wanted to develop his c8 bishop. The move is justified by principles as well. White must open the position for the bishop pair and to break the stronghold of the d4 knight as well. Without proper support, it might become a potential target for White.

18...exf4 19.♗xf4

White has freed the c7 square for the knight with tempo.

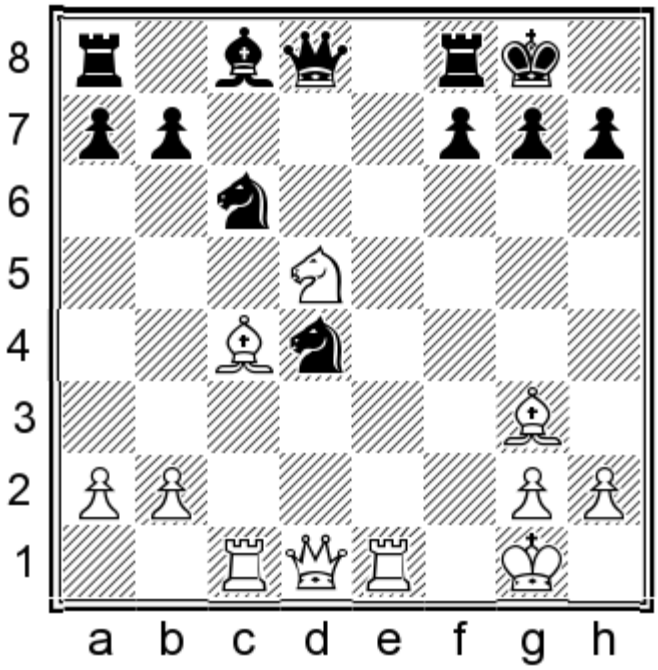
19...♕h4?!

After this, there's no more equality for Black. Exchanging the queens seems to be very suspicious as well, but it looks like Black could have kept his position together. 19...♕g4 20.♗d6

(*20.b4!?* is also possible, trying to win a piece with b5. Black cannot prevent it with a6 because of the b6 hole, but still: *20...♕xd1 21.♖exd1 ♗g4!* and on *22.b5 ♘xb5 23.♗xb5 ♗xd1 24.♖xd1* seems to be playable, even though White should be slightly better.)

20...♖d8 21.♘e7+ ♘xe7 22.♖xe7 looks like a win, but Black just survives after 22...♕xd1+ 23.♖xd1 ♗e6! 24.♖xd4 ♗xc4 25.♖xc4 ♖xd6=

20.♗g3 ♕d8?



20...♕g5 was the last chance, but after 21.♖e4! White achieves a better position. 21...♗e6 22.♖xd4! ♘xd4 23.♗f4! to protect the c1 rook 23...♕g4 24.♕xd4 ♖ad8 25.♖f1 and Black retains practical chances.

21.♘c7!

Kramnik already foresaw the final blow!

21...♖b8 22.♘b5! ♖a8 23.♗d6!

Finally, the dark squares caused too many problems for Black. He should have sacrificed an exchange, but the outcome of the game would have been clear anyway.

23...♖e8

23...♘xb5 24.♗xf8+-

24.♗xf7+!! ♔xf7 25.♕h5+

The king must run into the center, but too many pieces are hunting him there.

25...g6 26.♕xh7+ ♔f6

White can choose between many different wins. Kramnik found a spectacular mate. His opponent kindly allowed him to show it over the board.

27.♘xd4 ♘xd4 28.♕h4+ ♔f7 29.♖c7+

29.♕xd4+-

29...♗d7 30.♕h7+ ♔f6 31.♖f1+ ♔e6

31...♘f5 32.♖xd7 ♕b6+ 33.♔h1+-

32.♕xg6+ ♔d5 33.♖c5#

Not an ordinary mate, which finishes a great game.

1–0

GAME 7
D. Andreikin (2715)
S. Sjugirov (2635)
65th ch-RUS Moscow RUS (6)
09.08.2012, [B17]
Annotated by Balogh Csaba

A beautiful attacking game awaits! We might think that computers have killed this type of game from the highest level, but as we will see they are still played occasionally. White caught his opponent out with a slightly forgotten line in the opening then Black made some normal-looking moves, which appear to have been decisive mistakes.

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 dxe4 4.♘xe4 ♘d7

This was Karpov's favorite move in his best years. Recently, it has gone a bit out of fashion. Caro-Kann players prefer the 4...♗f5 line.

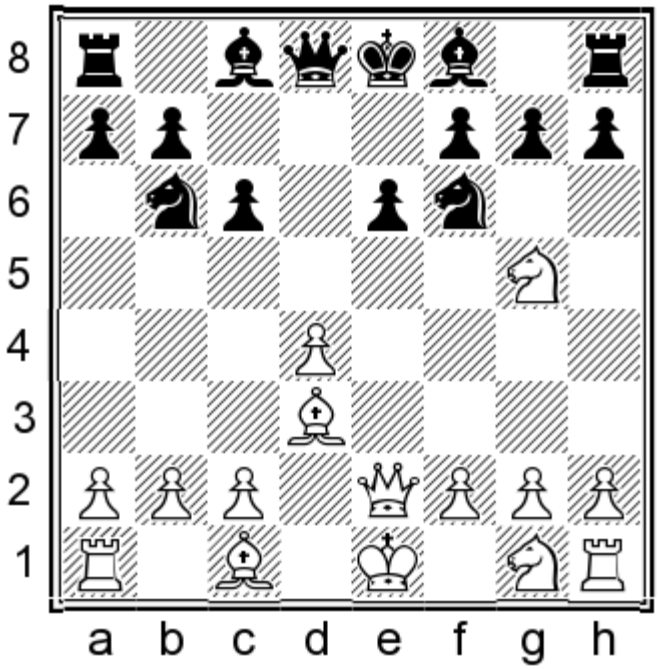
5.♗c4

Probably this move caught Black as a surprise. 5.♘g5 is considered to be the only critical line for Black, but of course, if somebody plays an opening, he/she must be familiar with the subtleties of the sidelines as well, otherwise they can face such painful defeats as in this game.

5...♘gf6 6.♘g5 e6 7.♕e2

Quite a concrete line, Black must react precisely against the direct threat of ♘xf7!

7...♘b6 8.♗d3



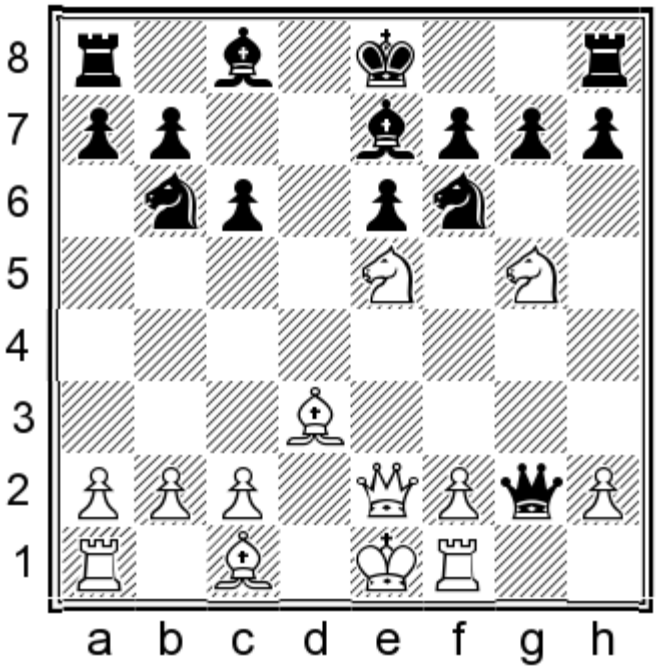
8.♗b3 is another move with a huge body of theory, to which Black should respond in the same way as in the game. 8...h6 9.♘5f3 c5

8...h6!

Black should not take the poisoned pawn. 8...♕xd4 is very risky 9.♘1f3! with the idea of ♘e5 and Black cannot protect the f7 pawn. 9...♕d5 Only move!

(*9...♗b4+?* has a nice refutation: *10.c3!* and on *10...♗xc3+ 11.♔f1!* An intermediate move, followed by bxc3 with a piece up.)

10.♘e5! At least Black can take another pawn here, but his position remains shaky... 10...♕xg2 11.♖f1 with a strong initiative. The game may continue with 11...♗e7



12.♘ef3! Due to the threat of trapping the queen with ♖g1, Black must walk into another motif. 12...♕g4 13.♘xf7! ♖f8 (*13...0-0* could have been Black's idea, but it doesn't work. *14.♘h6+! gxh6 15.♖g1+-*)

14.♖g1 ♕h5 15.♘7e5→ Followed by ♗d2 and 0-0-0 with a strong attack. The e5 knight dominates the position and Black cannot get rid of it with an f6 push.

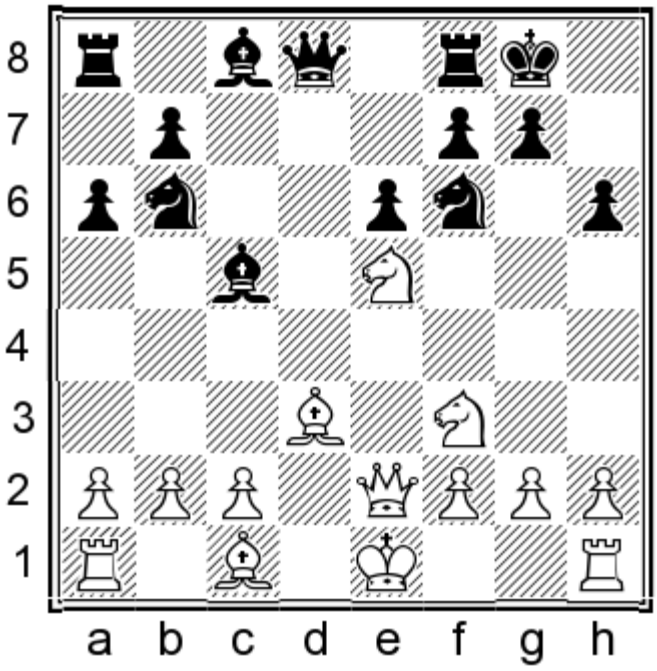
9.♘5f3 c5 10.dxc5 ♗xc5

Probably Sjugirov knew the theory until this point and thought that Black was fine. From now on he can play using his own mind, since they appear to have reached a comfortable middlegame. But the subtleties are just about to come...

11.♘e5 0-0?!

This most logical move is the first inaccuracy. As the famous saying of GM Evgeny Bareev says: "Castling is a waste of tempo". This should only be done if you cannot improve any of your pieces. Actually, in this case, that's exactly the situation. I think we can believe Karpov that 11...♘bd7 is the most exact move, forcing White to castle kingside by pressing the e5 knight. White should hold it there at any cost if he hopes to get an advantage. 12.♘gf3 ♕c7 13.0-0 ♗d6 14.♖e1 and only now 14...0-0 followed by b6-♗b7 with an equal position. Note that ♗f4 is usually met with ♘h5. White cannot hold his e5 knight that way.

12.♘gf3 a6?



12...♘bd7 was better again, but here White already has time to castle queenside. 13.♗d2 ♘xe5 14.♘xe5 and I prefer White's position.

13.g4!!

A great move, which shows another drawback of Black's 0-0. White makes use of the serious weakening of h6, which helps White attack to roll. After this move White has very easy play, while Black's defensive task is extremely difficult.

13...♘bd5

I have tried other moves as well, but they don't help either. 13...♘bd7 Black can eliminate one knight on e5, but the other one jumps to its place. 14.g5 hxg5 15.♗xg5 The open g-file contains too many threats to hold. 15...♕a5+

(*15...♗e7 16.♖g1 ♘c5 17.0-0-0+-* If Black eliminates the strong d3 bishop, the rook will join the attack along the 3rd rank.)

Against the check, White can always calmly respond with 16.♔f1! The king is safe here, while ♖g1 is coming next move. 13...♘fd5 trying to keep the g-file closed, but this brings other problems. 14.g5 h5 15.♕e4! with deadly threats again. 15...g6 16.♘xg6+- wins. 13...♕c7 14.g5 hxg5 15.♗xg5 ♘fd7 16.♖g1 and White is crushing.

14.♖g1!

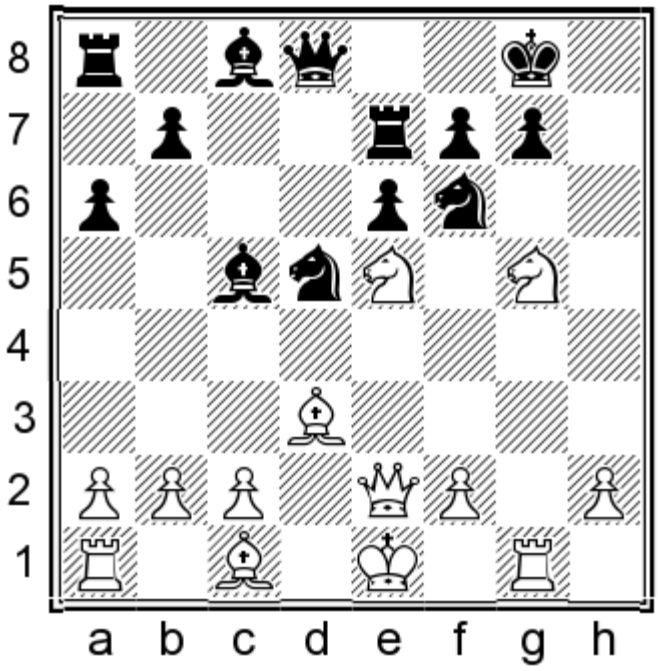
This move is even more precise than the direct g5. White has not decided yet with which piece he wants to recapture on g5. Black cannot prevent the g5 threat anyway. 14.g5 hxg5 15.♗xg5 was also good.

14...♗b4+

I tried 14...♖e8 with the idea of hiding the king on f8, but of course it did not work in the end. 15.g5 hxg5 16.♘xg5! is the strongest.

(*16.♗xg5 ♔f8 17.0-0-0*)

16...♖e7



And here, similarly to the game, White wins with a great tactical firework. 17.♘h7!! Opening the g-file, the threat is ♗h6! 17...♘xh7 18.♗xh7+ ♔xh7 19.♕h5+ ♔g8 20.♖xg7+!! These moves are already automatic after ♘h7. 20...♔xg7 21.♗h6+ ♔h7 and here the fastest way to mate is 22.♗e3+! ♔g8 23.♕g5+ ♔f8 24.♕h6+ ♔g8

(*24...♔e8 25.♕h8#*)

25.0-0-0! ♗xe3+ 26.fxe3+- and mate in a few moves.

15.♔f1!

The king is completely safe here, while the attack continues with g5!

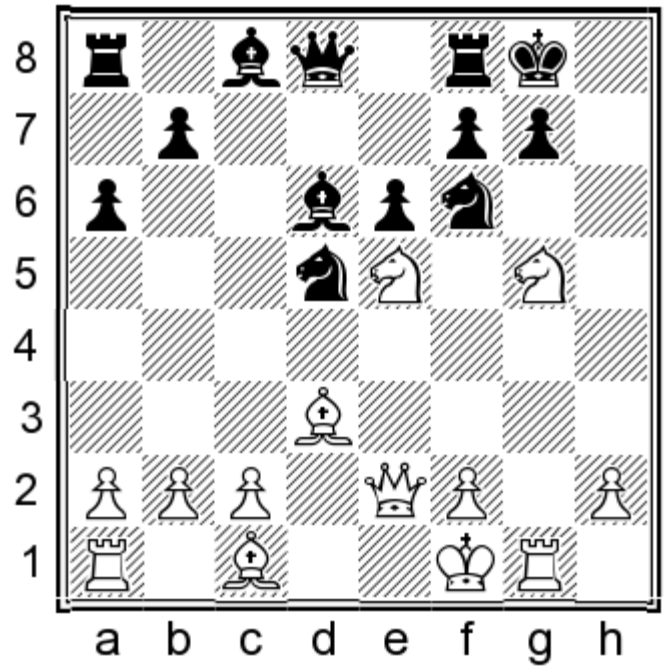
15...♗e7

15...g5 does not help. 16.h4! and White is crushing anyway. On 15...♗d6 16.g5 hxg5 17.♗xg5 b5 the strongest is 18.♕d2! The idea is to take the queen to h6. Black has no good defense against the following threat: 18...♗b7 19.♗h6! ♘e8 20.♗xg7! ♘xg7 21.♕h6+- and mate.

16.g5 hxg5 17.♘xg5!

This is even stronger now! Black cannot parry the fantastic threat that we have already seen in the 14...♖e8 line.

17...♗d6



17...♕c7 is refuted in the same way. 18.♘h7!! ♘xh7

(*18...♖d8 19.♗h6+-*)

19.♗xh7+ ♔xh7 20.♕h5+ ♔g8 and the mate is forced after 21.♖xg7+! ♔xg7 22.♗h6+ ♔h7

(*22...♔g8 23.♕g4+ ♔h7 24.♕g7#*)

23.♗xf8+ ♔g8 24.♕xf7++-

18.♘h7!!

The recurring motif. The simple threat is ♗h6 and Black cannot prevent it.

18...♕c7

18...♘xh7 leads to the same mate we saw in the 17...♕c7 line. 19.♗xh7+ ♔xh7 20.♕h5+ ♔g8 21.♖xg7+! ♔xg7 22.♗h6+ ♔h7

(*22...♔g8 23.♕g4++-*)

23.♗xf8+ ♔g8 24.♕xf7++-;

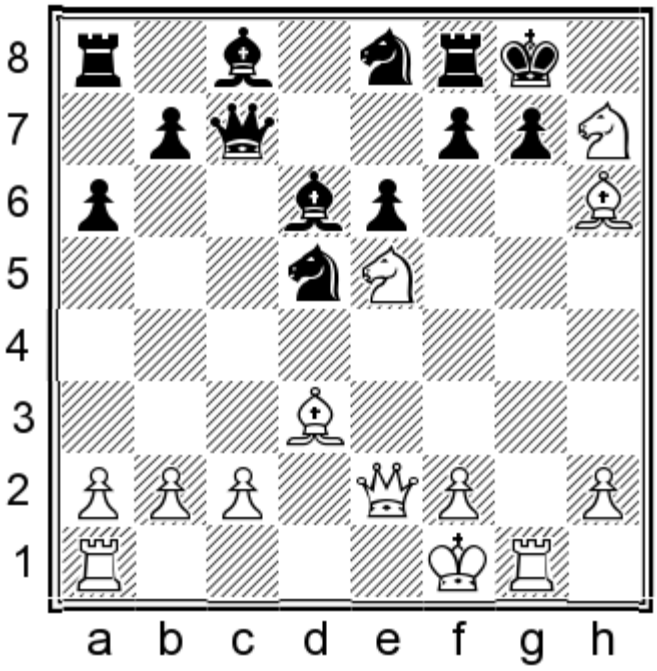
18...♖e8 19.♗h6+-;

18...♘e8 Black tries to survive with an exchange sacrifice, but actually, White can play for more... 19.♘xf8 ♔xf8 20.♘xf7! After this strike, Black has no chance to fight back in the game. 20...♔xf7 21.♕h5+ ♔e7 22.♗g5+! and Black gets mated in both cases. 22...♘ef6

(*22...♘df6 23.♗xf6+ gxf6 24.♕h7++-* ♖g8 next.)

23.♗xf6+ ♘xf6 24.♖xg7+ ♔f8 25.♕f7#

19.♗h6! ♘e8



Try to find the final blow of the game! Everything is forced, it only requires some spectacular calculation... 19...g6 Here the sacrifice on g6 screams out to be played. 20.♘xf6+ ♘xf6 21.♘xg6! fxg6 22.♖xg6+ ♔h8 and the easiest is 23.♗xf8 ♗xf8 24.♖xf6+- a material advantage and mating attack.

20.♗xg7! ♘xg7 21.♖xg7+! ♔xg7 22.♕g4+ ♔h8

22...♔h6 23.♕g5#

23.♘f6!!

A worthy finish to a great game! Black resigned in view of 23.♘f6 ♘xf6 24.♕h4+ ♔g7 25.♕g5+ ♔h8 26.♕xf6+ ♔g8 27.♕g5+ ♔h8 28.♕h6+ ♔g8 29.♕h7# Bravo!

1–0

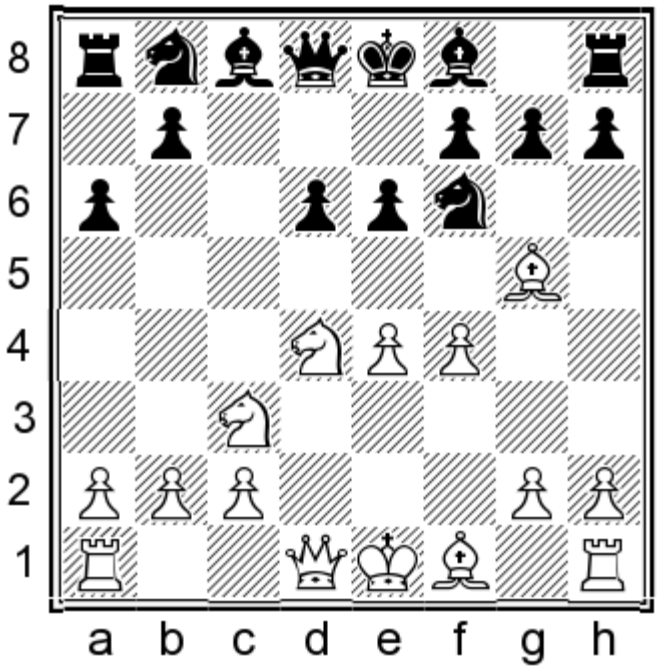
GAME 8
V. Ivanchuk (2769)
M. Vachier-Lagrave (2686)
40th Olympiad Open Istanbul TUR (9.1)
06.09.2012, [B96]
Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

A game between two players as creative as these is always exciting. And this time also we won't be disappointed!

1.♘f3 c5 2.e4

We are back in the Sicilian. It's hard to say why Ivanchuk decided to start the game with 1.♘f3?! Vachier-Lagrave plays the Sicilian exclusively against 1.e4.

2...d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗g5 e6 7.f4



We are in one of the main positions of the Sicilian Najdorf. Thousands of games have been played here. The position is very sharp and was analyzed for generations without any concrete results!

7...♕c7

Lately, this move disappeared from fashion. Black has been playing more often 7...♕b6, or 7...h6 8.♗h4 and now ♕b6. Of course, one of the main moves is 7...♘bd7.

8.♗xf6

This is the main option to "punish" Black. White is losing the bishop pair, while gaining a very clear plan: to play against Black's central pawn structure. Usually, they play f5-g3-♗h3 applying maximum pressure.

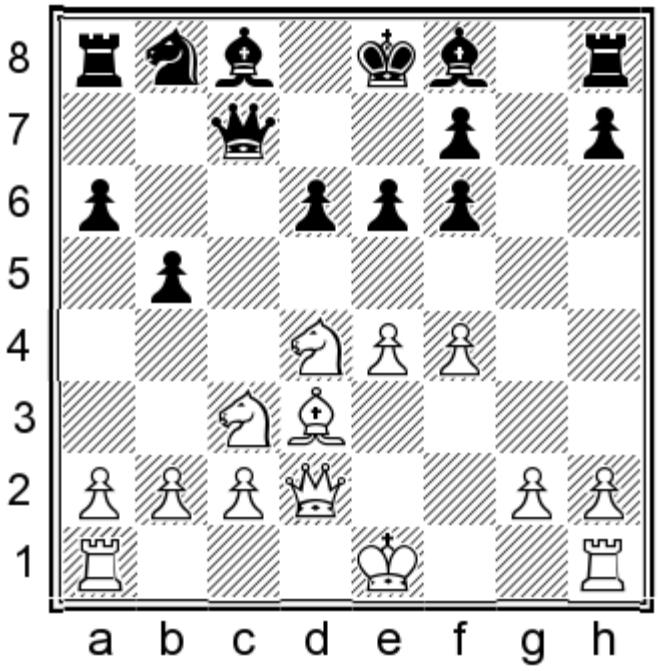
8...gxf6 9.♕d2

Another move can be 9.♕d3 with the idea of bringing the Queen to h3, where it would increase the pressure against the e6 pawn, plus the ♗e2-♗h5 maneuver could be unpleasant for Black.

9...b5

Quite a risky move by Black. 9...♘c6 10.0-0-0 ♗d7 leads to well known positions.

10.♗d3!?



Very creative play by Ivanchuk. I think almost everyone would castle long without thinking too much! To put the bishop on d3 is very unusual in these structures. More “main stream” would be ♗e2, forcing Black to play h5 — Black can’t allow White to put his bishop on h5, it’s a well known rule in the Najdorf.

10...♗b7 11.0-0

The key to White’s idea — castling short. It’s difficult to say if the idea gives some advantage — but it’s clear that it’s very interesting. Black doesn’t have his usual play on the queenside anymore.

11...♘c6

Of course not 11...♕b6?! 12.♔h1! protecting the knight on d4 indirectly. 12...♕xd4 13.♗xb5+

12.♘b3

White needs to keep as many pieces on the board as possible to support his future attacking plans. Another plan for White could be connected with playing a4.

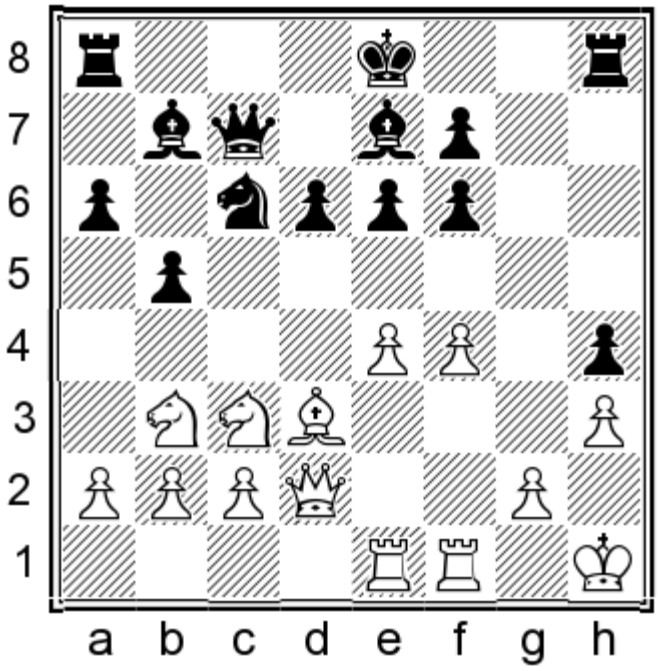
12...h5?!

I don’t like this move too much, even though it’s a “standard” plan for Black. Why not to hurry with h5 now? White’s bishop is on d3 and not on e2. I think that moves like 12...♗e7 followed by b4 or ♖c8 would be a better reaction here. The position is very complicated of course, but I think Black should be doing fine.

13.♔h1 h4 14.h3

Of course, White doesn’t allow Black to play h3.

14...♗e7 15.♖ae1



White prepares everything for the action in the center.

15...b4

Black says with this move: ‚either You play ♘d5 now, or you'll never do it.'

16.♘d5!?

A very interesting and sharp sequence is beginning. The White pieces are standing almost at their maximum, but Black has a full extra piece, which is a huge material advantage. Let's see how things develop.

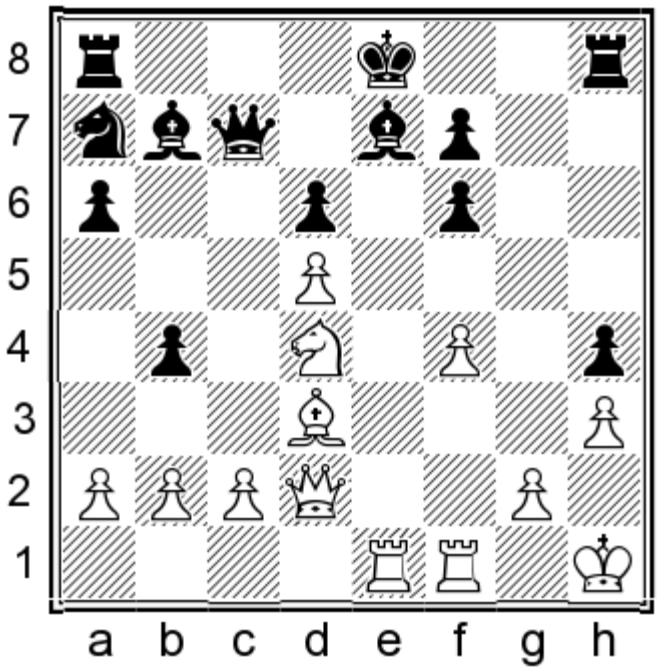
16...exd5

Anything other than taking on d5 would just lead to a bad position, 16...♕d8 17.♘xe7 and White is much better.

17.exd5 ♘a7!

A nice move by Black. The knight from a7 can always jump to c8 if there's a need to protect the bishop on e7 urgently.

18.♘d4!



I like this move a lot. White doesn't care about giving away the d5 pawn for immediate action. This is the way to play the Sicilian — no slow play!

18...♗xd5

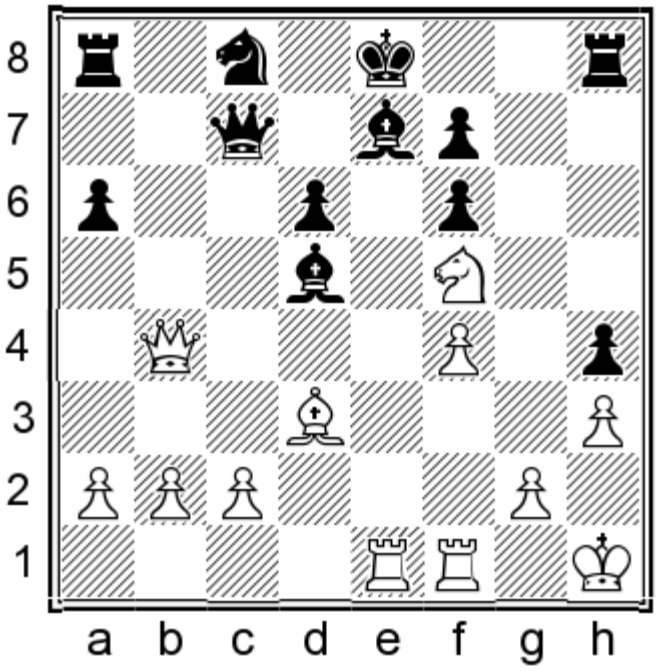
Black needs to take the pawn on d5. In case of a passive defense with 18...♔f8 19.♘f5 ♘c8 20.♖e3 White creates extra pressure on the e-file by doubling the rooks. 20...♗xd5 21.♖fe1 ♗e6 22.♖xe6! A strong and typical sacrifice on e6. 22...fxe6 23.♘d4 Even though White is a full rook down, White's attack is more than dangerous here. Black can't stop White from playing ♘xe6, and White will combine the threats against the Black king with the weakness of the white squares to create some super-dangerous play!

19.♘f5

Where will the Black knight go now? To c8 or c6...

19...♘c6?!

19...♘c8! Sometimes the more passive move can be the better one — but a move like ♘c8 is very hard to play. 20.♕xb4



(*20.*♖*f2* doesn't bring much now. *20...*♕*c5!* The Black queen is perfectly placed. *21.*♖*fe2* ♖*a7* The e7 bishop is very well protected as well. Black should be doing better here.)

20...♔f8 21.♖f2 ♕c5 and I think that Black is fine. Of course, the position is stills complex with a lot of tactical motifs, which always give White good practical chances.

20.♗e4

Another option was 20.♗b5!? axb5 21.♕xd5 A lot of Black pieces are hanging, but Black has a defensive move: 21...♖d8! protecting from a lot of threats at the same time. 22.♖e2 ♔f8 23.♕f3 with quite a similar position to the one in the game, except that the rook on e2 is better placed than on e4. There's no d5 push with tempo.

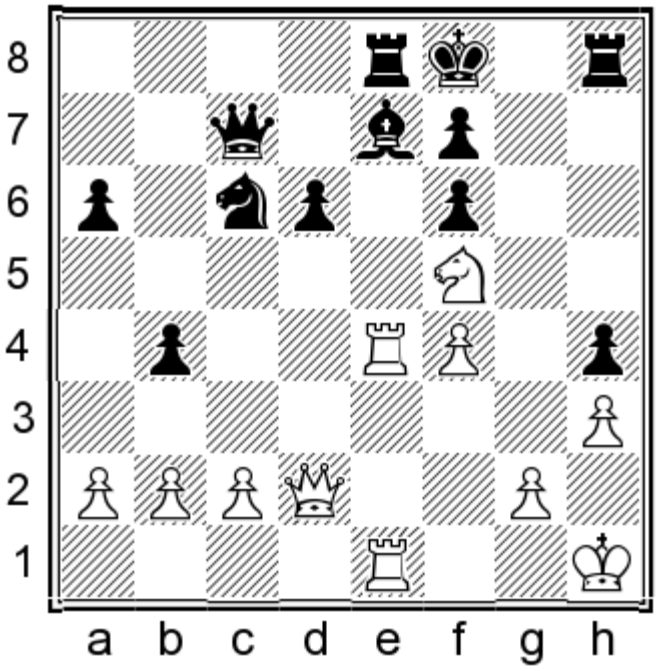
20...♗xe4 21.♖xe4

Black is a full piece up, but the position remains very unclear. The White knight on f5 is worth at least "half a piece".

21...♔f8

The Black king finally escapes from the dangerous position on e8 — now the Black rook is going to stand there.

22.♖fe1 ♖e8



23.♕e2

White brings the Queen to g4, where she will create additional threats.

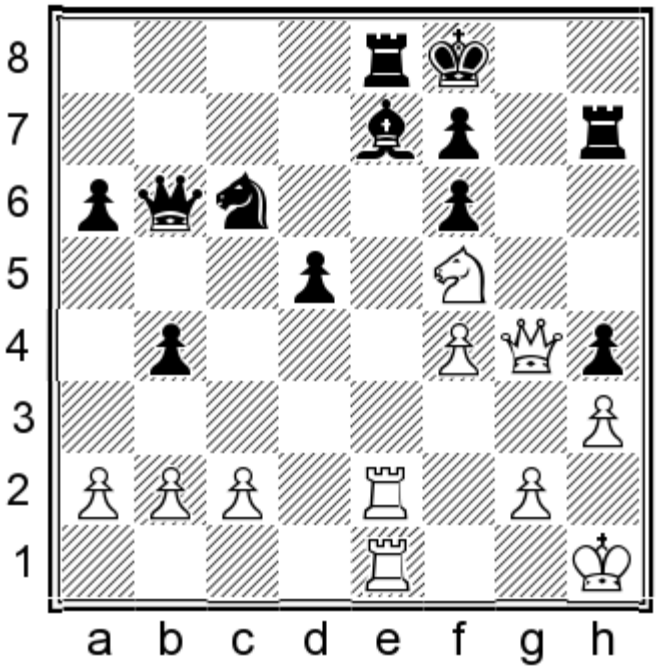
23...♖h7

23...d5 24.♕g4 ♖h7 25.♖4e2 would lead to the position in the game.

24.♕g4 d5 25.♖4e2

We are facing a funny position. White has no “direct” threats, but Black has no “direct” plan to get rid of the nasty pin on the e-file either. It’s sort of a double-zugzwang position. The question for Black is: What can I do to get out of the pin? For White: How can I improve my position?

25...♕b6?!



This move already gives away the material, but strangely enough, Black seems to have no plan! Very rarely we see someone a piece up, having an almost hopeless position — but that seems to be the current situation. White's idea is to play g3 next, obtaining the g-file to have some extra mating threats. 25...♕d7 Black is preparing to give away a full knight in order to exchange queens — but I could not find a better defense. 26.g3! Opening the g-file. 26...♘d4 It's never great to give the full piece for "nothing". 27.♘xd4 ♕xg4 28.hxg4 hxg3+ 29.♔g2 ♖h2+ 30.♔xg3 ♖xe2 31.♖xe2 with a very big advantage for White in the endgame.

26.g3

Following the already-known idea, but why not win the piece back immediately? 26.♘xe7 This move is too simple not to see it. It's strange that both players thought the position was fine for Black. I think White is doing much better. 26...♘xe7 27.♖xe7! Easy but nice 27...♖xe7 28.♕c8+ ♔g7 29.♖xe7 ♕f2 30.♕g4+ ♔f8 31.♖d7! With this horrible pawn structure, it's hard to imagine Black surviving here.

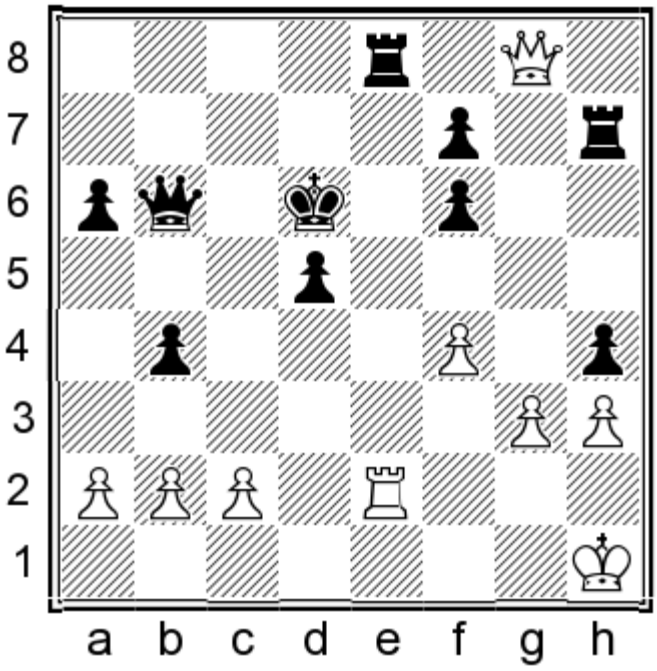
26...♘d4

Black's only hope 26...hxg3 27.♕xg3 and Black has no defense against ♖g2-♕g8 mate.

27.♘xe7!

Nice calculation by White! Now everything is forced.

27...♘xe2 28.♕g8+ ♔xe7 29.♖xe2+ ♔d6



30.♖xe8!

30.♕xe8? ♕d4! And Black is back in the game. It's very difficult to mate the Black king, and the White king is suddenly open as well. Of course White's still better, but the game could very easily end in a draw.

30...hxg3 31.♕f8+!

The only winning move! The logical looking 31.♖d8+? leads to nothing more than a draw. 31...♔c7 32.♖c8+ ♔d6 33.♖d8+ ♔c7

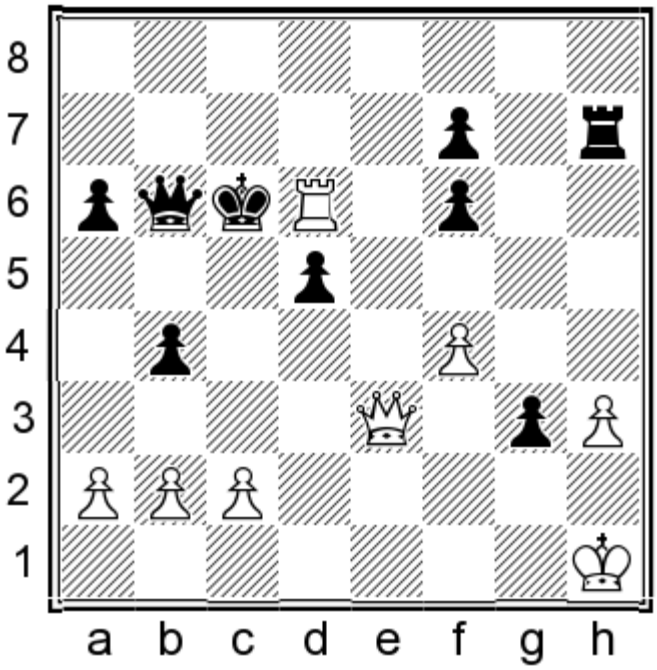
31...♔c6 32.♖c8+ ♔d7 33.♕e8+!

White is playing just perfectly.

33...♔d6 34.♖d8+ ♔c5 35.♕e3+

And finally Black loses his Queen.

35...♔c6 36.♖d6+



What an interesting game! Great play by White. We saw a typical knight sacrifice on d5 followed by the “usual” attacking motifs with the great additional idea of opening the g-file by playing g3! Let’s hope we can use some of these principles in our own games!

1–0

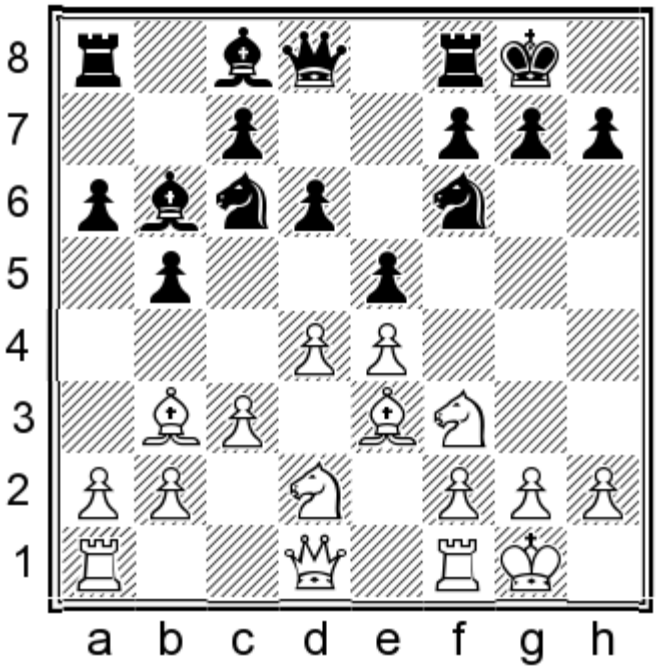
GAME 9
S. Karjakin (2778)
F. Caruana (2773)
5th Final Masters Bilbao ESP (2)
25.09.2012, [C78]
Annotated by Balogh Csaba

A very impressive game by Caruana, who took over the initiative right after the opening and converted his advantage with a spectacular double exchange sacrifice.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 b5 6.♗b3 ♗c5

A very complex opening, which is an excellent way to play for the win. Its only problem is that weaker players have various different ways to force a draw with White in some long lines. But of course, top players try to play ambitiously.

7.c3 d6 8.d4 ♗b6 9.♗e3 0-0 10.♘bd2



This was considered to be one of the main options, but I believe that after this game it's better to forget about it as White. Caruana deviates with a sideline from his previous games.

10...♗b7!

Theory suggested subtle chess with 10...h6 11.h3 ♖e8 12.♖e1 ♗d7 but Hou Yifan introduced a strong novelty against Caruana: 13.♕b1! This seemed to give an edge. The game was analyzed in detail in the CEWN Nr.4.

11.♖e1 exd4

Another very rare move. Generally it's better to keep the tension in the center, but now Black seems to be excellently prepared to gain strong counterplay. 11...h6 was the main line.

12.cxd4 ♘b4

A typical reaction after exd4. Black must immediately put pressure on the central pawns.

13.♕e2

This is the novelty. White prepares a pawn sacrifice that gives him more than enough compensation, but Black is not forced to accept it, he can calmly continue his plan. The move 13.d5 must always be countered by undermining it: 13...c6! 14.dxc6 ♗xc6 with a balanced position.;

13.♕b1 leads to a similar position to the game after 13...c5 14.a3 ♘c6 15.d5 ♘e7

13...c5!

13...♘xe4?! is what Karjakin was hoping for 14.♘xe4 ♗xe4 15.♗d2 Black is forced to give up his strong bishop and his knight gets shut out of the game. 15...♗xf3 16.♕xf3 c5 17.♕g3! with a promising position.

14.a3

White is forced to send away the knight, because it was threatening to occupy the d3 square after c4. 14.d5? c4!

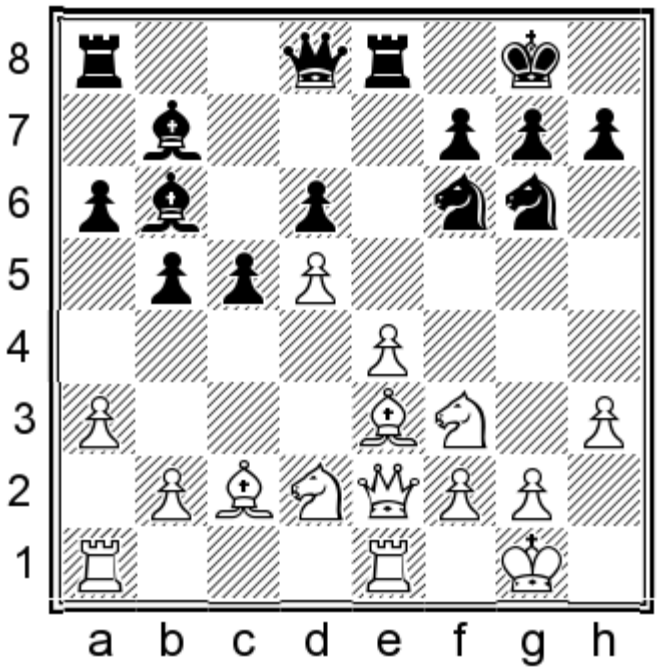
14...♘c6 15.d5

Karjakin plays the most ambitious way. If he manages to transfer his d2 knight to g3, he'll get a comfortable position. However, Black is just in time to put enough pressure on e4. The most direct 15.dxc5 dxc5 16.e5 is almost always an option, but here Black is ready to play 16...♘g4! trapping the bishop, since ♗f4 loses to c4.

15...♘e7 16.h3

White must use an important tempo to prevent the ♘g4 threat. 16.♗c2 would be the principled move, protecting e4 followed by the knight maneuver, but Black has 16...♘g4! 17.♗f4 c4! The dark squared bishop becomes really powerful. 18.♗g3 ♘g6 19.h3 ♘f6 Black is fine!

16...♖e8 17.♗c2 ♘g6



Probably it was all analyzed by Caruana, and he's already slightly better. White must search for a plan other than the knight transfer. It could only work on the queenside.

18.b3

White wants to play a4, but it allows Black to improve his position seriously. 18.a4 immediately would have been met with 18...c4 Black is OK!

18...♗a5!

Very well played! Caruana installs his bishop on c3, where it completely confuses the co-ordination of the White pieces.

19.♖ab1

19.a4 leads to a similar position like in the game. 19...♗c3 20.♖ac1 b4 Karjakin preferred to get his e1 rook out of the pin to free his play a bit.

19...♗c3 20.♖ec1 b4!

Stabilizing the bishop. White can’t make use of the c4 square, because both the d2 knight and the c2 bishop must protect the e4 pawn.

21.a4

21.axb4 is not much better. 21...♗xb4 22.♗d3 h6 The bishop is equally well placed on b4 as on c3.

21...a5

Black wants to improve his bishop and White needs to prevent this.

22.♗d3 h6

A very useful waiting move. It’s hard to suggest a plan for White.

23.♕d1?

This is clearly a mistake, but in a bad position it’s hard to be clever. White wanted to play ♕c2 to over-protect the e4 pawn in order to execute the knight transfer to g3. On 23.♗b5 Black has two good options: 23...♘xe4! I like this exchange sacrifice a lot. According to the game continuation, we can be quite sure that Caruana was also intending to play it. Black will collect the d5 pawn soon as well.

(*23...♖e7* is also good.)

24.♗xe8 ♕xe8 25.♘c4 ♕e7 26.♖d1 ♘f6 White’s rooks have no future in this game.

23...♗a6!

Probably Karjakin underestimated this move. White can’t exchange his bishop, since he will be unable to protect the e4 weakness.

24.♗c2

If we look at the white pieces, we see a terrible picture. It’s all because of the monster on c3 and the weak e4 pawn. Everything stands perfectly for Black, but he must work hard to convert the advantage. 24.♕c2 ♗xd3 25.♕xd3 ♖a7! followed by ♖ae7. White collapses.

24...♖a7!

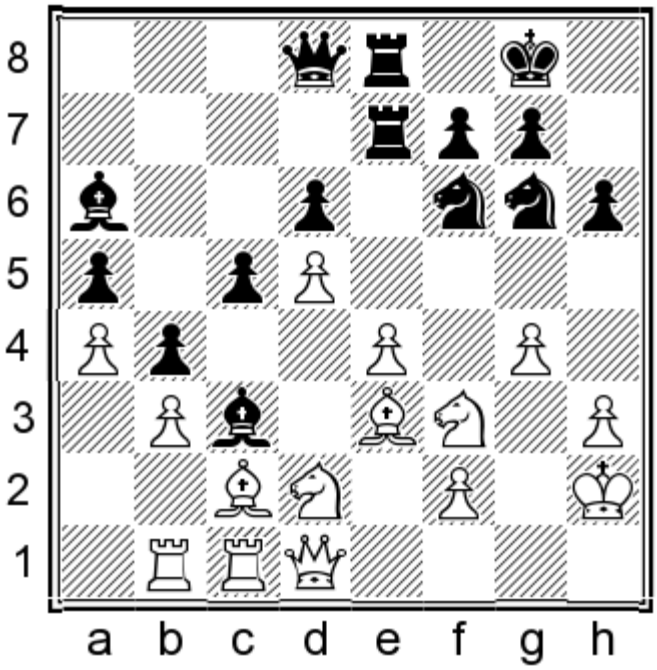
Activating the rook through e7. This is a famous plan from the Benoni structures.

25.♔h2

What else?

25...♖ae7 26.g4?!

Of course, such a weakening move only helps Black, but White had no useful moves anyway.



Probably the best was passing with the king on g1 and h1, but it would lead to the same result as in the game. 26.♔h1

26...♘xe4!

A great exchange sacrifice, using the fact the the White rooks are completely dominated by the Black bishops. White's position simply collapses. Actually, Black could also have waited for a better moment, since 26...♕d7 27.g5 only helps Black. 27...hxg5 28.♗xg5 ♘xe4! 29.♘xe4

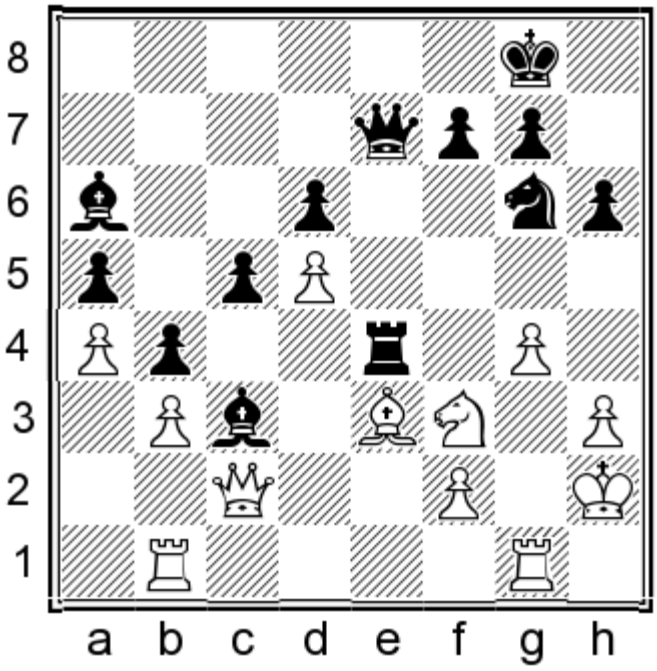
(*29.♗xe7 ♘xf2* and h3 falls.)

29...♖xe4 30.♗xe4 ♖xe4 followed by ♕f5. The game is over.

27.♘xe4 ♖xe4 28.♗xe4 ♖xe4 29.♕c2 ♕e7

What to do as White? Actually, Black wants to play the same against any move.

30.♖g1



30...♖xe3!!

Just brilliant! Another exchange sacrifice destroys White's position.

31.fxe3 ♕xe3 32.♖bf1

White would like to get rid of one of the bishops, but their value is much greater than the rooks, so Black increases the pressure.

32...♗e2!

Caruana wants to crack the stability of the f3 knight, since ♗e5 with check would be decisive.

33.♕f5

Black can already choose between many different ways to win.

33...♗d3

33...♘h4 was also very nice. 34.♘xh4 ♗e5+! and mate is coming soon. 35.♔g2 (*35.♔h1 ♕xh3#*) 35...♕g3+

34.♕d7 ♗e5+

Black only gives up one of his bishops because it leads to a forced win.

35.♔h1

35.♘xe5 ♕xe5+ 36.♔h1

(*36.♖g3 ♗xf1*)

36...♗e4+ 37.♖g2 ♘f4 finishes the game.

35...♗e4 36.♕e8+ ♘f8

A brilliant victory by Caruana. It’s rarely seen that a player of Karjakin’s level gets crushed this way.

0–1

GAME 10
V. Kramnik (2795)
L. J. McShane (2713)
4th London Chess Classic Olympia, London (5)
06.12.2012, [D15]
Annotated by Balogh Csaba

A really wonderful crush by Kramnik with a lot of sacrifices.

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 a6 5.g3

Recently, this 5.g3 line against the Chebanenko Slav was considered to be quite a harmless approach, but this game might change the general opinion.

5...dxc4 6.a4

White wants to recover the c4 pawn, therefore he prevents b5. 6.♗g2 b5 7.♘e5 ♗b7 is the start of the other line, where White tries to find compensation for the pawn in the center with e4.

6...e6 7.♗g2 c5 8.0-0

8.dxc5 is the most common move, but after 8...♕xd1+ 9.♘xd1 ♗d7! This very deep novelty was introduced by Karjakin back in 2009 and it seems to solve all of Black’s problems. 10.♘e5 ♘c6=

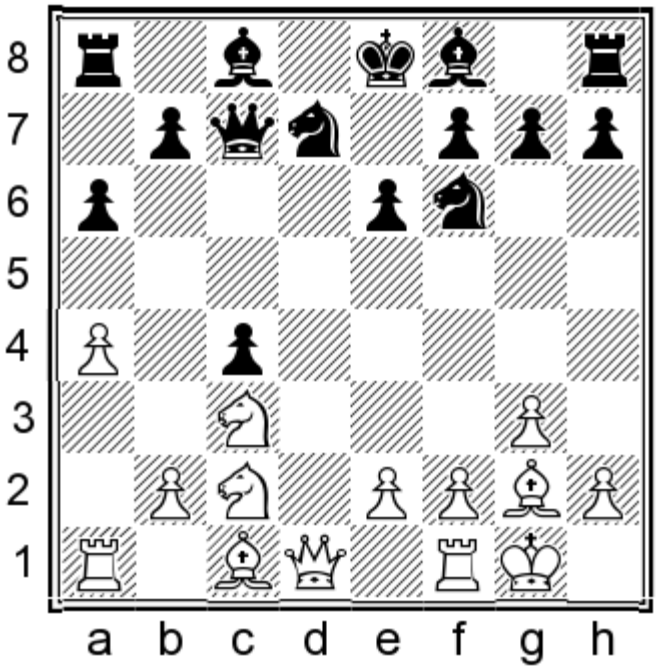
8...cxd4 9.♘xd4

It could not be a real surprise for McShane that Kramnik chose this line, since he had already played it in two games.

9...♘bd7 10.♘c2!

White wants to win back the c4 pawn, so he drives his knight to e3.

10...♕c7



11.♗f4!

This is the novelty of our game. Black provokes the e5 move, after which the d5 square becomes a real hole in Black's camp. Kramnik has deviated from his own game, which continued with 11.♕d4 ♗c5 12.♕h4 ♗e7 13.♘a3 ♘e5 14.♗f4 h6 15.♗xe5 and at this moment, the players agreed to a draw. Kramnik-Gelfand, Linares 1997.

11...e5

If Black restrains himself from giving up control over the d5 square and plays 11...♕c5, then 12.a5! was probably Kramnik's preparation with the idea of 12...♗e7 13.♖a4! 0-0 14.♘a3! With this cool maneuver, White wins back the pawn and obtains a clear advantage as all his pieces are perfectly placed. The main problem for Black is that he can't protect his pawn with b5 because the a8 rook will hang at the end.

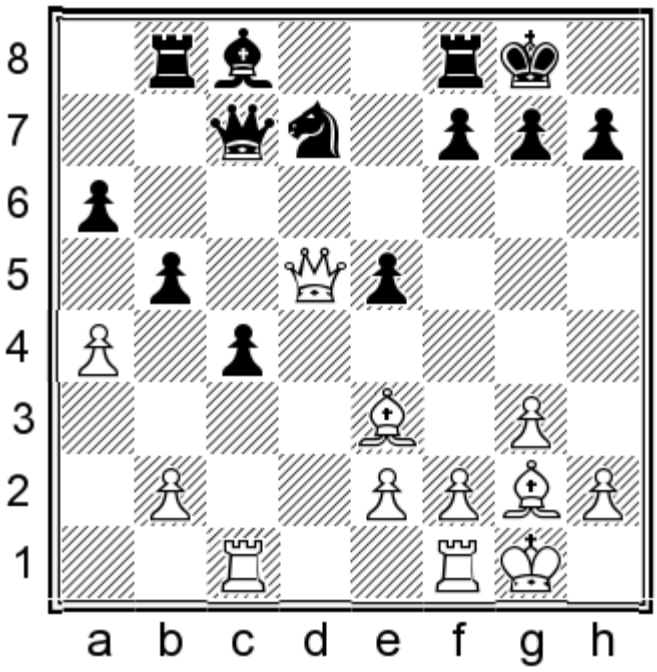
12.♗d2!

12.♗g5 is much worse because of 12...h6 and the bishop won't be able to return to g5 as happened in the game.

12...♘c5

Black would like to preserve his c4 pawn advantage and wants to protect it with ♗e6. In addition, he is ready to jump with the knight to b3. 12...♗e7 is met with 13.♘e3! and ♘cd5 next is going to be really unpleasant.;

12...♗c5 was an alternative, as was pointed out by Kramnik at the press conference. He was intending to play 13.♘e3 0-0 14.♖c1 White is very close to restoring the material balance. 14...♗xe3 15.♗xe3 ♖b8 Black is finally ready to push b5, but this still doesn't allow him to equalize: 16.♘d5! ♘xd5 17.♕xd5 b5



18.♕c6! This concrete solution demonstrates well the power of the bishop pair. 18...♕xc6 19.♗xc6 ♗a7 is threatened, and on 19...bxa4 20.♖fd1! suddenly the f8 rook is going to be trapped, 20...♘f6 21.♗c5!

13.♗g5!

By eliminating the f6 knight, the d5 square becomes even more vulnerable.

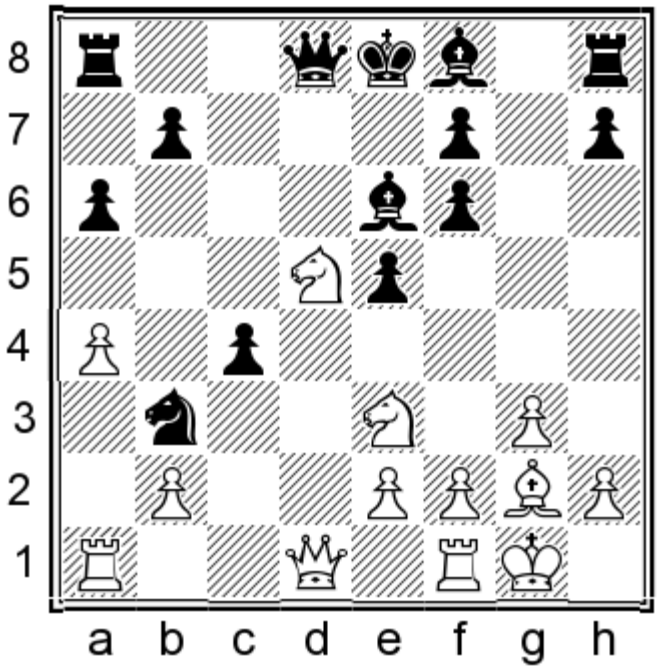
13...♗e6

Black tries to control the d5 square, but this allow White to destroy his pawn structure. 13...♗e7 is not better either. 14.♗xf6 ♗xf6 15.♘d5 ♕d8 16.♘ce3 ♗e6 17.♘xc4± The power of the minor pieces is just huge. White wants to play ♘cb6 and ♖c1, or just b4 with a big advantage.

14.♗xf6 gxf6 15.♘d5 ♕d8

The absence of the light-squared bishop will tell after 15...♗xd5 16.♕xd5 ♘b3 17.♖ad1 followed by ♘e3, with complete control on the light squares.

16.♘ce3 ♘b3



17.a5!!

A shocking move, based on excellent calculation and great intuition! White frees the a4 square for the rook, or for the queen, if the rook is taken. McShane was expecting 17.♖b1 and after 17...♖c8 he would successfully consolidate his position.

17...♖c8?

The critical test was definitely 17...♘xa1 18.♕a4+!

(*18.*♕*xa1* is too slow. *18...*♗*c5*)

18...♗d7 Only move. 19.♕xc4 ♘c7 is threatened. 19...♖c8 20.♕h4 ♖c6! 21.♖xa1 Despite the fact that White doesn't even have a pawn for the exchange, it's clear that with such active pieces it's much easier and better to play the position as White. However, Black also has some chances after 21...f5!

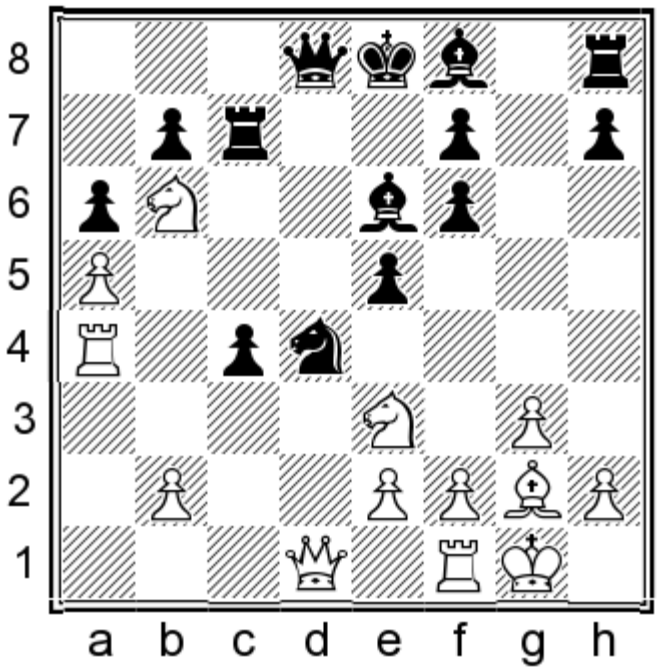
18.♖a4!

This was the point! Now White is ready to recover the pawn again and if it falls, the Black position collapses.

18...♘d4

Black indirectly protects the c4 pawn, as the d5 knight is hanging after all. On 18...♘xa5 19.♘xf6+! looks pretty strong. 19...♕xf6 20.♖xa5 Black has too many weaknesses. Not only the pawns, but also the light squares.

19.♘b6! ♖c7



20.♖xc4!!

Another shocking blow, with fantastic intuition again! In a few moves, we'll get a clear picture of why the absence of the e6 bishop is worth a rook. 20.♘bxc4 After 20...♗c5 Black obtains a playable position. Suddenly, the bishop pair and the strong knight on d4 are enough compensation for the weakened structure.

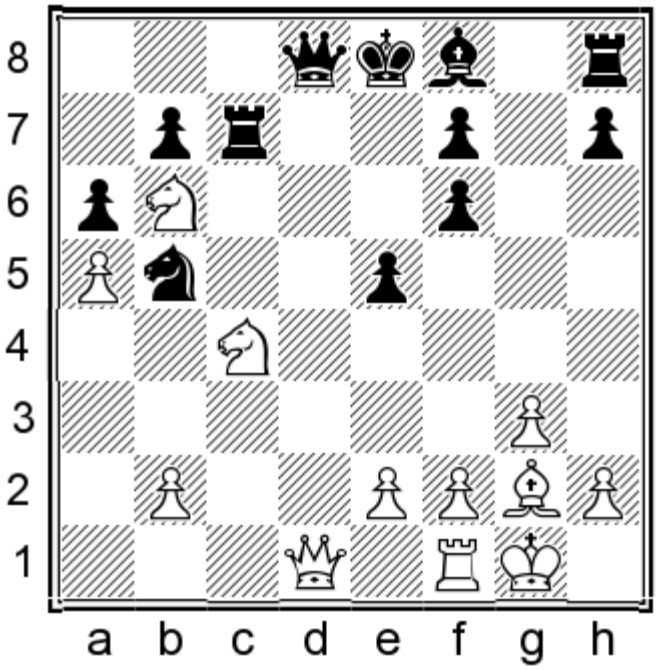
20...♗xc4

Black is worse even if he does not accept the exchange: 20...♗c5 21.♘bd5 ♖c8 22.♕d3 followed by ♖fc1.

21.♘exc4±

White is ready to kick out the d4 knight with e3. It's very nice to see the way White plays on the light squares in the following lines...

21...♘b5



21...♗c5 is met with 22.e3! ♘e6 23.♘d5 ♖d7 24.♕f3 White continues dominating even without the queens on the board. 24...♖xd5 25.♕xd5 ♕xd5 26.♗xd5± The b7 pawn is a clear weakness.;

21...♗e7 22.e3! ♘e6 23.♕a4+ ♔f8 24.♘d5!

(*24.*♖*d1* is less precise. *24...*♕*e8*)

24...♖c5 25.♘cb6 ♔g7 26.♖d1 Black can't move! ♕g4 is coming with a mating attack. ♘d7 is also in the air.

22.♕b1!

Very nice! Keeping the eyes on the light squares. ♖d1 joins the game next.

22...♕d4

Otherwise, after ♖d1, the queen would only have one square on b8, which was definitely not a tempting alternative.

23.♖d1 ♕c5 24.e3

Taking control of the d4 square. It was also strong to transfer the knight to d5 first. 24.♘e3 ♘d4 25.♘ed5 ♖c6 26.e3! with a winning advantage as well.

24...♗e7 25.♕f5!

Storm clouds are approaching. At this moment, McShane had only 3 minutes left against Kramnik's one hour.

25...♔f8 26.♗d5!

By protecting the c4 knight, White threatens ♘d7.

26...♔g7 27.♕g4+ ♔h6

Obviously, White has several ways to win, but Kramnik continues to play for the spectators!

28.e4!

Of course, to give up the d4 square is a potential mistake, but it has a concrete reason — White wants to mate Black with ♘e3-f5. Black has only one way to defend.

28...♘d4 29.♘e3

29.b4!? was another pretty win. 29...♕xb4 30.♖xd4! exd4 31.♕f4+ ♔g7 32.♕xc7+-

29...f5

Otherwise ♖xd4 decides the game. Now Kramnik has calculated a very long, forced and spectacular line until the win.

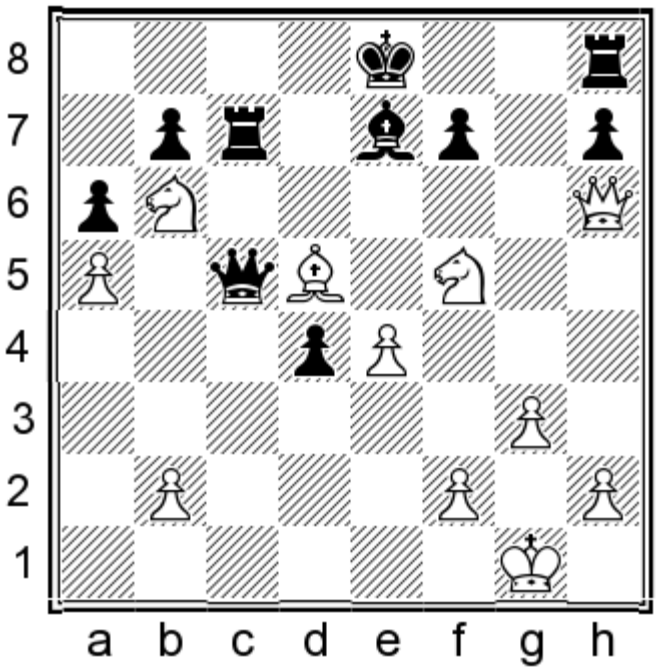
30.♕h3+!

30.♘xf5+ ♘xf5 31.♕xf5 is also winning for White.

30...♔g7 31.♖xd4!

Another exchange sacrifice. This is already the 3rd in the game; McShane refused to accept the first one on a1.

31...exd4 32.♘xf5+ ♔f8 33.♕h6+ ♔e8



34.♗xf7+!

This was the point. Black can't hope for salvation. 34.♕g7 ♖f8 is not clear.

34...♔d8

34...♔xf7 35.♕g7+ ♔e6

(*35...♔e8 36.♕xh8++-*)

Now the best, but not the only way, to win is 36.♘xd4+ ♔d6 37.♕h6+! ♔e5 this is not a good sign. 38.♘f3+ ♔xe4

39.♕f4+ ♔d3 40.♘e5+ ♔c2 41.♕e4+! After this subtle chess, Black can't avoid losing his queen with ♘d3 check. For instance, after 41...♔b3 42.♕a4+ ♔xb2 43.♘d3++-

35.♕g7 ♖f8 36.♘xd4

Suddenly, ♘e6 threatens mate in one. Quite an unusual picture. 36.♘d5 was also winning.

36...♖c6

36...♖xf7 also loses to 37.♕xf7

(*37.♘e6+?? only leads to a perpetual check after 37...♔e8 38.♕g8+ ♖f8 39.♘g7+ ♔d8 40.♘e6+=*)

37...♕xd4 38.♕g8++-

37.♘xc6+ bxc6

Black seems to have some hopes because of the f2 square, but the next move destroys all these dreams.

38.♕g4!

with a double mate threat on d7 and c8. Kramnik admitted that he calculated until this moment when he played 30.♕h3! Impressive!

38...♔c7 39.♕d7+ ♔b8 40.♕d2?

The only mistake in the game by White. McShane had only 3 seconds left to make the last move of the time trouble and Kramnik wanted to shock him with this unexpected retreat, with the idea of ♘d7. We'll get the same position two moves later, when White then plays the strongest move.

40...♔c7

40...♗g5 could have been a small chance, although the position remains lost 41.♘d7+ ♔c8 42.♕d1! (*42.♘xc5 ♗xd2 43.♗c4* is also technically winning, but of course, to enter such an endgame when Black is so close to getting mated gives a bad feeling...) 42...♖d8 43.♕g4! These were the best moves, after which White is still winning easily... 43...♖xd7 44.♗e6+-

41.♕d7+ ♔b8 42.♔g2!

A cool move. Suddenly, Black finds himself in zugzwang as he can't play ♖d8 because of ♕xd8 and ♘d7.

42...♗d6

42...♖d8 43.♕xd8+ ♗xd8 44.♘d7+;

42...♖xf7 43.♕c8+ ♔a7 44.♕c7#

43.b4!

Now the game is over. Black has to give up his c6 pawn because d6 has to be protected.

43...♕d4 44.♕xc6 ♔a7

Almost all moves are winning now...

45.♔h3

Kramnik calmly avoids ♕xe4 check, after ♘c8 ♖xc8 ♕xc8. Black can resign now.

45...♕d1

45...♕xf2 46.♕d7+ ♔b8 47.♕xd6++-

46.♘c8+ ♖xc8 47.♕xc8

White ends up with 4 extra pawns and the mating attack continues. 47.♕b6+ ♔a8 48.♗d5++- was even easier.

47...♕f1+ 48.♔g4 h5+ 49.♔xh5

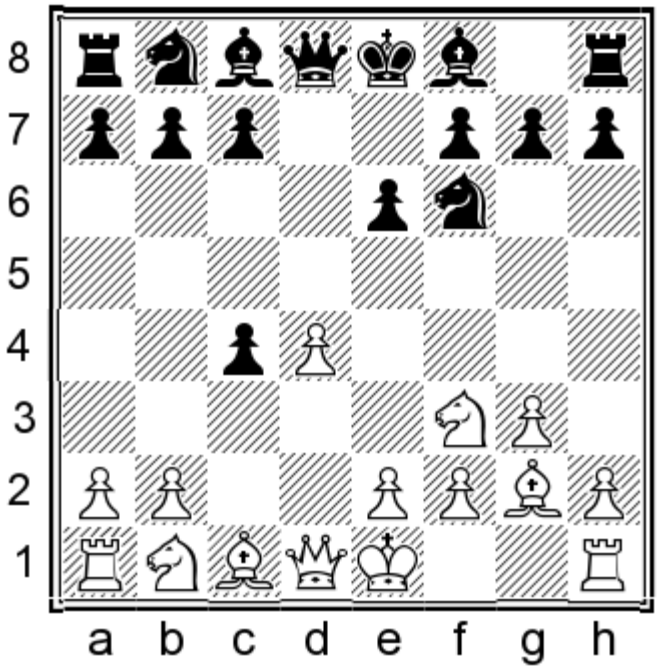
What a brilliant performance by Kramnik! Amazing!

1–0

GAME 11
A. Giri (2720)
A. Morozevich (2748)
SportAccord Rapid Men 2012 Beijing CHN (2)
14.12.2012, [E04]
Annotated by Balogh Csaba

Morozevich chose a risky opening to confuse his opponent in this rapid game, but Giri punished him in great style.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.g3 dxc4 5.♗g2



5...b5

A rare sideline against the Catalan. Black would like to preserve his extra pawn, but of course this gives huge compensation to White in the center.

6.a4!

The most logical reaction in such situations. The goal is to lure the c-pawn out of the center in order to use the ♘e5, e4 and d5 ideas more effectively.

6...c6 7.♘e5! ♘d5

Black had to move into the e4 tempo gain if he wanted to save his pawn. On the other hand, the e4 move closes the diagonal of the bishop.

8.0-0 a6

8...♗b7 is more logical, with the idea of protecting the c6 pawn and to play ♘d7. However, White can and should transpose to the game with 9.axb5 cxb5 10.b3! cxb3 11.♕xb3 a6 and we are back in the game.

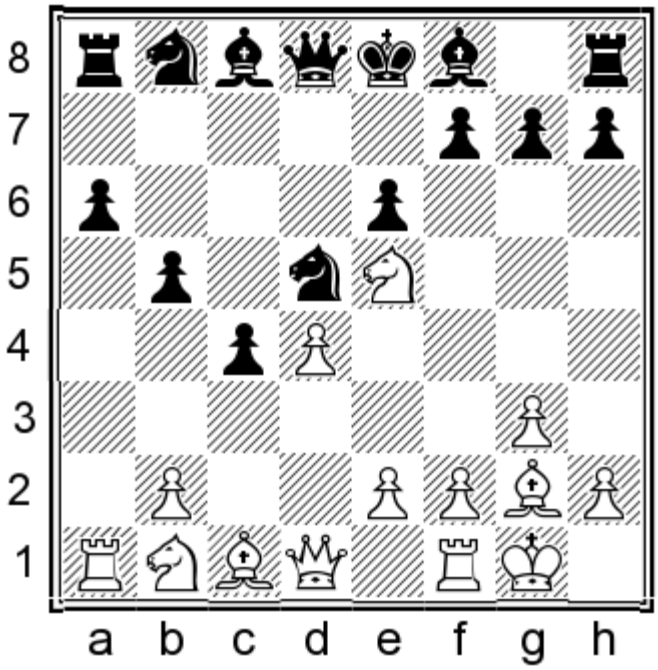
9.axb5!

In this kind of positions 9.e4 ♘f6 10.d5!? is another typical motif, trying to make use of the undeveloped Black pieces, but after 10...♕c7! Black seems to be able to consolidate his position.

(*10...cxd5 11.exd5 exd5* would be met with *12.axb5* and ♘xc4 threatens to gain an advantage.)

11.♗f4 (*11.♘xc6* is not advisable. *11...♘xc6 12.dxc6 b4!* Since the c4 pawn is not hanging anymore, Black could lock the queenside. The c6 pawn is lost and Black has a good position. *13.e5 ♘d5 14.♗xd5 exd5 15.♕xd5 ♗e6!* followed by ♖c8.) 11...♗d6 with an unclear position.

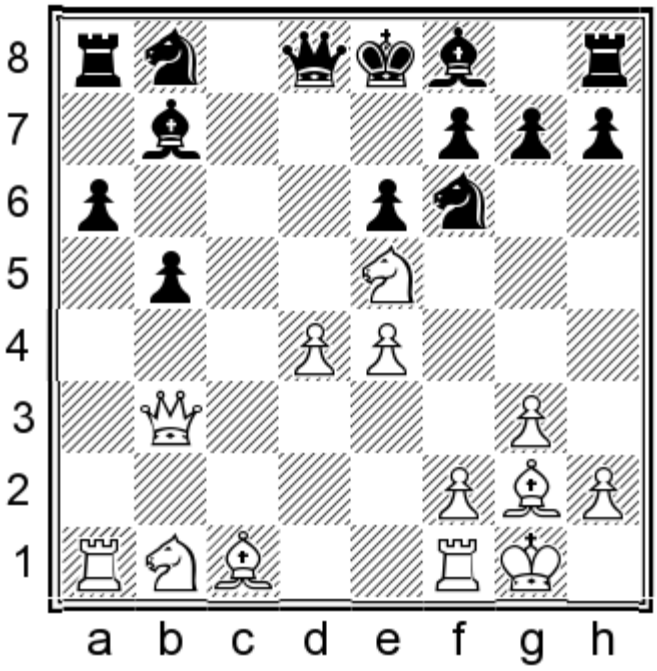
9...cxb5



10.b3!

Very well played! White undermines the queenside and forces Black to develop his queen with a loss of tempo. All the tempi wasted by Black in the opening allow White to generate more than enough compensation with some energetic play.

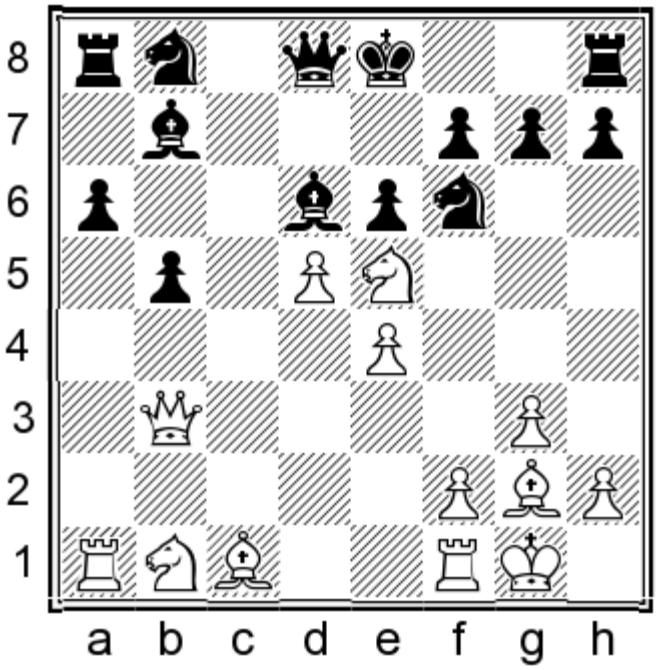
10...cxb3 11.♕xb3 ♗b7 12.e4! ♘f6



13.d5!

White has no time to waste. If Black consolidates with ♗e7, 0-0 and ♘bd7, he ends up with a clear extra pawn. The position had to be opened against the e8 king.

13...♗d6



13...exd5 14.exd5 ♗xd5 taking another pawn. This is a way too brave decision.

(*14...♗d6* allows the unpleasant *15.♘c6* and ♖e1 next.)

15.♕e3! Black has problems in all the lines. 15...♗e7

(*15...♕e7 16.♗xd5 ♘xd5 17.♕e4±; 15...♗xg2 16.♘c6++-*)

16.♖d1±

14.♘xf7!!

The sacrifice is based on exact calculation and strong intuition.

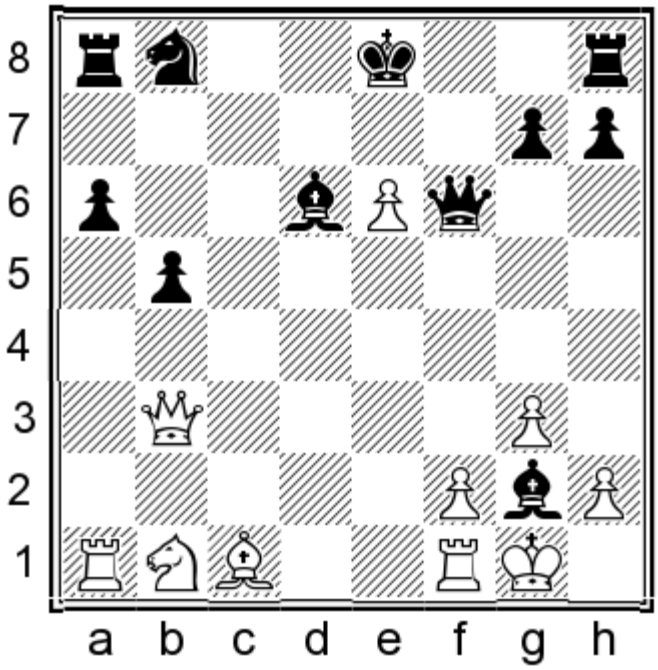
14...♔xf7 15.dxe6+ ♔e8 16.e5!

This was the point! Of course, after the decision of sacrificing on f7, there is no way back. White must play the most aggressive moves and hope that the attack breaks through.

16...♗xg2

16...♗xe5 is refuted by 17.♗xb7 ♖a7 18.♗xa6!! and the b5 pawn falls. 18...♗xa1 19.♗xb5+ ♔e7 20.♗a3+±

17.exf6! ♕xf6



17...♗xf1? loses to 18.fxg7 ♖g8 19.e7! and g8 falls, as on 19...♔xe7 20.♗g5++- wins the queen.

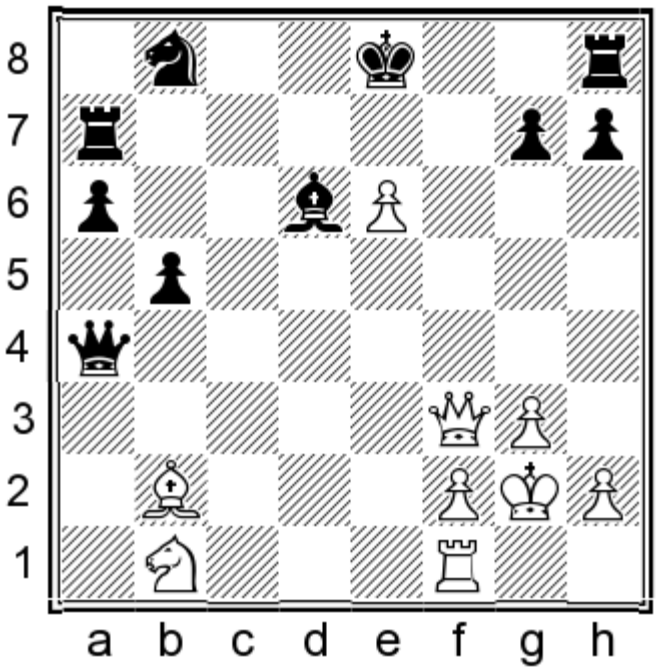
18.♔xg2!

Of course, the a1 rook had to be sacrificed. This gives further tempi for White to lead out his attack, but on the other hand he has to play precisely as he's already a full rook down.

18...♕xa1 19.♗b2! ♕a4 20.♕f3

The double attack with 20.♕d5!? also looked tempting, but Black is able to give back his material advantage and trade off the queens by 20...♕c4! 21.♕xa8 ♕c6+ 22.♕xc6+ ♘xc6 Black has decent chances of surviving here.

20...♖a7?



20...♕c2 with the idea of trading queens on c6. This was the only move according to the computer. The difference with the 20.♕d5 line is that White can keep the queens on. 21.♕f7+ ♔d8 22.♗xg7 ♕c6+ 23.♔g1 ♖e8 24.♖d1! with a huge attack. In a practical game, Black is basically in a hopeless position, but of course, the machines continue resisting.

21.♖c1!

Another cool move, despite being a rook down. White activates his rook and Black is hopeless against the threats.

21...♔d8

21...♖c7 doesn't save the day... 22.♖xc7 ♗xc7 23.♗xg7 and the rook is lost, given that after 23...♖g8 24.♕f7 wins.

22.♗f6+!

Finishing the game in style!

22...♗e7

22...gxf6 leads to a forced mate. 23.♕xf6+ ♖e7 24.♕xh8+ ♖e8 25.♕f6+ ♖e7 26.♕f8+ ♖e8 27.♕xd6++-

23.♕d5+ ♘d7

23...♖d7 24.exd7+- and ♖c8.

24.♗d4

The most unpleasant move, creating the threat of ♗b6, and on ♔e8, ♖c8. 24.exd7+- was also good enough.

24...♖c7 25.♕a8+

Black resigned! A brilliant crush by Giri!

1–0

GAME 12
A. Morozevich (2748)
B. Jobava (2711)
SportAccord Rapid Men 2012 Beijing CHN (6.4)
15.12.2012, [E70]
Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

We'll see quite a crazy game now. Both players are well-known for their creative play and for not being afraid of taking risks.

1.d4

By the way, Jobava started all his games with 1.b3. And this not only in rapid chess, but also in his previous tournament at classical time-controls where he showed quite good results. The moment we see Magnus Carlsen playing 1.b3, it's time to switch!

1...♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 0-0

We are in the KID. Jobava likes to put his bishop on g7 very much. His main opening is the Benoni.

5.♗e3

5.e5 doesn't bring White anything because Black would play ♘e8, followed by d6 and c5, with an attack against White's center.

5...c6

A very rarely-played move and, of course, a huge provocation for White to play e5.

6.f3

Morozevich keeps cool and prepares the standard idea with ♕d2, 0-0-0 and h4. Of course, 6.e5!? ♘e8 7.f4 is definitely an option for White.

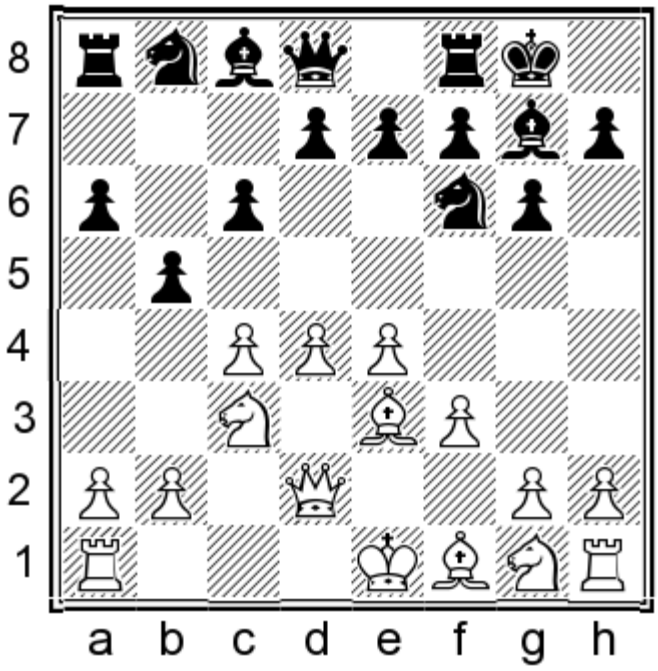
6...a6?!

And this is clearly already too much. Black should have played 6...d6 and entered the normal lines.

7.♕d2

White continues playing for the main idea.

7...b5



8.e5

Finally the e5 move, but was it needed!? I don’t think so-White could have continued with moves like 8.h4.

8...♘e8 9.♗h6

By exchanging the bishop on g7, Black’s future d6 is not going to be so strong and will weaken the Black king at the same time.

9...d6!?

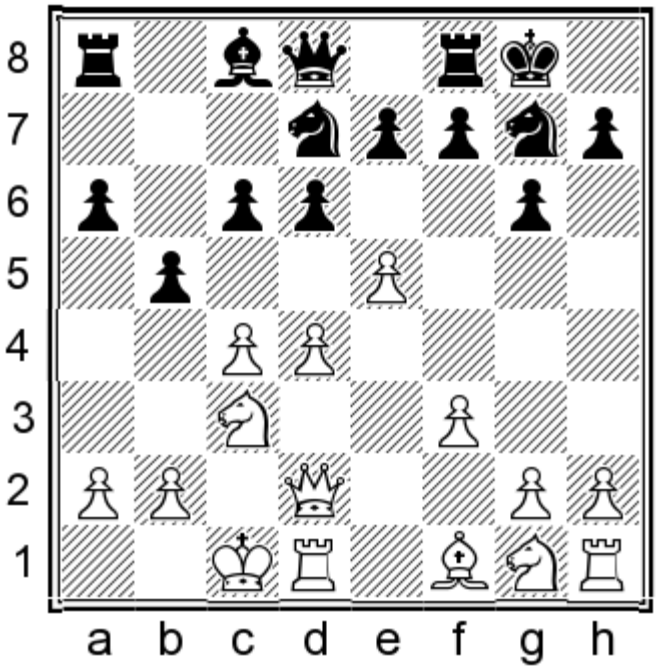
Black is starting to play against the center and even if Black’s position looks bad, things are very far from being clear.

10.♗xg7 ♘xg7 11.0-0-0?!

This move is slightly difficult to understand. Did Morozevvich want to exchange queens? What happens after...

11...♘d7?!

11...dxe5! It’s hard to find another move for White. 12.dxe5 ♕xd2+ 13.♖xd2 ♘d7 and if someone is better here, then it is Black!



12.g4!?

White is taking control of the f5-square, in order to have the ♕h6-♘e5-♘g5 idea in his pocket.

12...♗b7

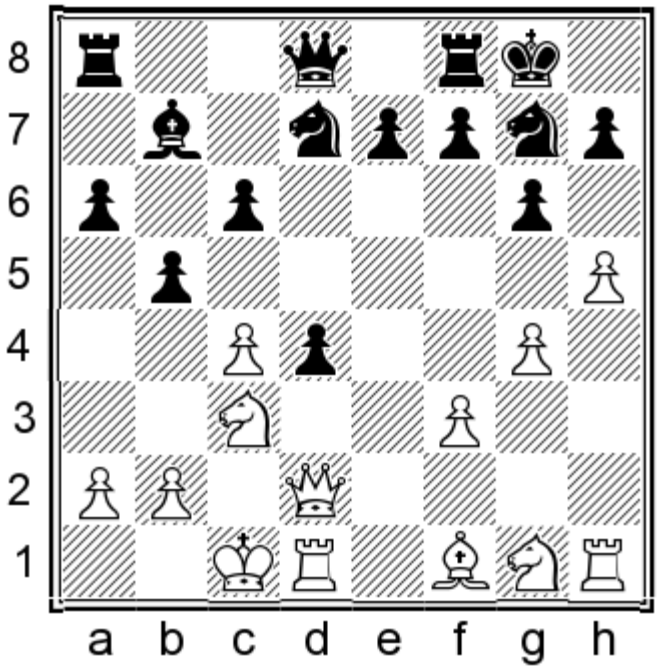
Here, it was also a better option for Black to take first on e5. 12...dxe5

13.h4 dxe5 14.h5

And White is starting his mating attack!

14...exd4

Black no longer has any easy decisions. 14...gxh5 could have been an alternative, but here we can clearly see that things around the Black king are getting darker. 15.♘e4 with a strong attack.



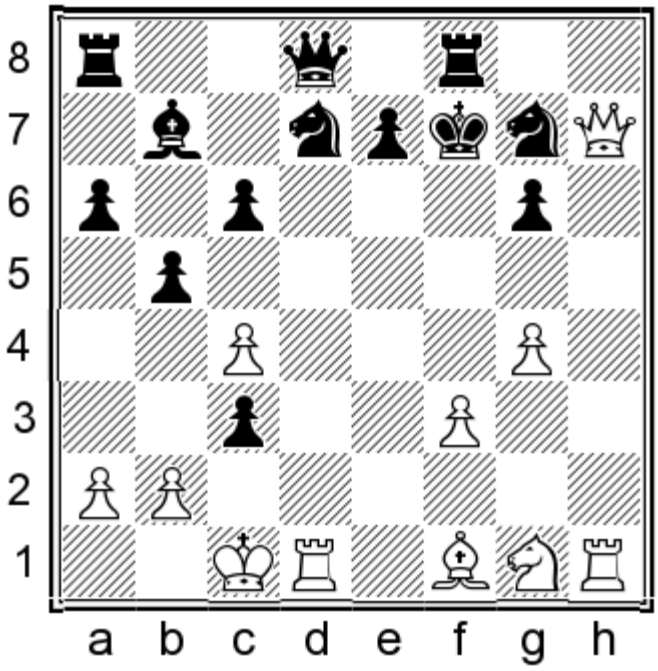
15.hxg6 dxc3

If you start taking, you should not hold back.

16.♕h6

Of course, in case of 16.gxh7+? ♔h8 17.♕xd7 winning the piece back 17...cxb2+ 18.♔xb2 ♘e6 only Black can be better.

16...fxg6 17.♕xh7+ ♔f7

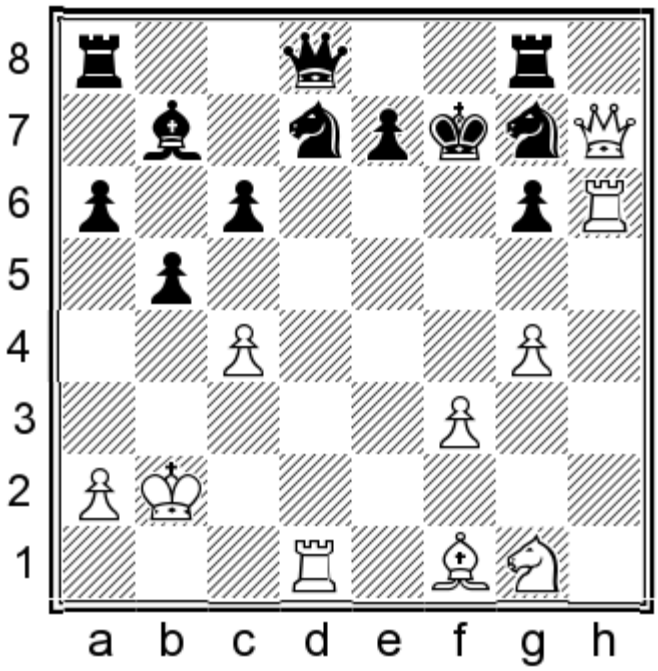


18.♖h6

White is attacking with all his pieces! He intends to play 18.♘h3 as well.

18...cxb2+ 19.♔xb2 ♖g8

Another defensive option was 19...♖h8 20.♕xg6+ ♔g8 At least, Black is exchanging on of White's rooks. 21.♖xh8+ ♔xh8 22.♘h3! White's idea to play ♘g5 gives him more than enough compensation. I would not like to be Black here.



20.♘h3!

White doesn't hurry to take on g6 and brings one more piece into the attack!

20...♘f8

Entering a forced line. Probably this is Black's best chance, even if it looks like his king should get mated somehow.

21.♘g5+ ♔f6 22.♕xg8 ♕xd1

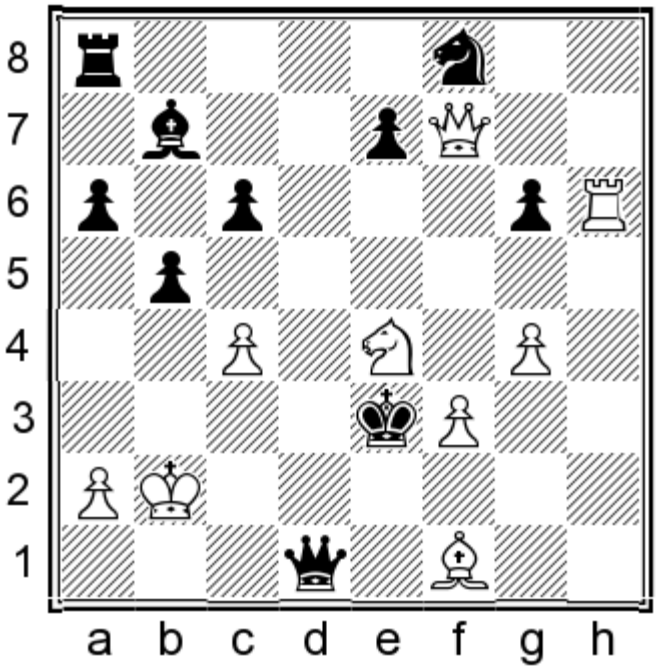
How to mate the Black king now?!

23.♘e4+!

Very strong move. White is defending from a perpetual check with ♕d2 next, and at the same time, simply winning the knight on g7. Silent but very strong.

23...♔e5 24.♕xg7+ ♔f4 25.♕f7+ ♔e3

Once again, White doesn't have a forced win and Morozevich finds the best way to play.



26.♕xe7!

Defending against 26...♕xf1 with 27.♘g3, winning the queen. At the same time, White wants to play 27.♘c3 and this could already lead to mate, or at least gain some extra material.

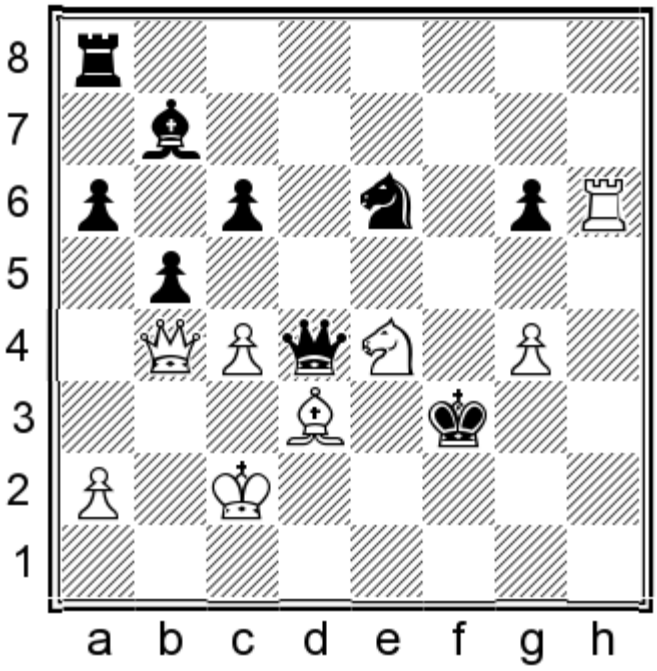
26...♕d8 27.♕b4 ♕d4+ 28.♔c2

Mates are threatened from all sides...

28...♔xf3 29.♗d3

A perfect move if you don’t want to calculate unnecessary lines. Immediately winning was 29.♕a3+ ♔xe4 30.♕g3! and the Black king will get mated after White’s ♗g2.

29...♘e6



30.♕e1

With at least 10 mating threats! What a nice game by White! We should learn from this game that provocations usually lead to nothing good...

1–0

GAME 13
L. Aronian (2802)
V. Anand (2772)
75th Tata Steel GpA Wijk aan Zee NED (4.5)
15.01.2013, [D47]
Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

How many times have we seen Aronian losing with White in under 25 moves? I can't remember any, but we'll now see one of the most spectacular chess games ever. How much was Anand's home analysis? This is hard to say, but probably almost until the end of the game. After the game, he admitted this was his preparation against Gelfand. All in all: super strong novelty, great play, very beautiful finish. A fantastic game.

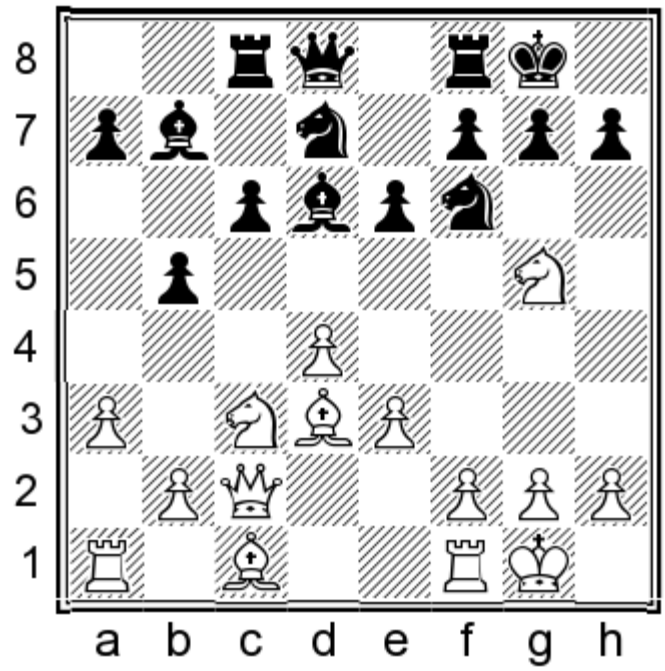
1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6

Lately, the Slav became Anand's favorite opening.

3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 e6 5.e3 ♘bd7 6.♗d3 dxc4 7.♗xc4 b5 8.♗d3 ♗d6 9.0-0 0-0 10.♕c2 ♗b7 11.a3 ♖c8

Everything is theory until here and this is one of the most popular lines of the Meran.

12.♘g5



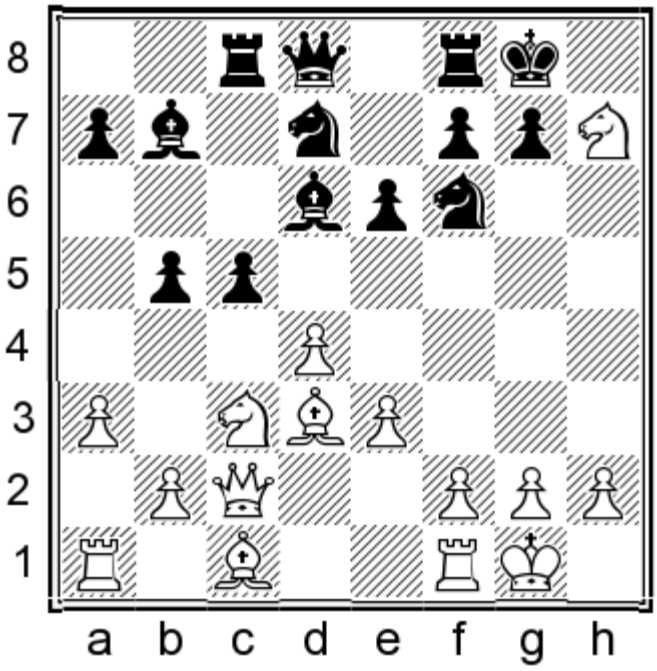
A fresh idea, which was introduced by Wojtaszek. The main idea of the Black move 11...♖c8 becomes visible after 12.b4 c5! This amazing move was played by Anand's second Kasimdzhanov in his game against Topalov. 13.bxc5 ♗xf3 14.gxf3 ♘xc5 15.dxc5 ♖xc5 16.f4 ♘d5 17.♗b2 ♘xc3 18.♗xc3 ♕c7 19.♖fc1 ♖c8 Black is winning back the piece and the position is a draw.

12...c5!

A very strong novelty! Now the game becomes very tricky and pretty forced. It is possible to win a pawn by playing 12...♗xh2+ 13.♔xh2 ♘g4+ 14.♔g1 ♕xg5 and it seems like Black is just a pawn up, but White is getting great play for it. 15.f3 ♘gf6 16.b4! White's bishop pair, plus his strong center and the very bad Black bishop on b7 gives White better play.

13.♘xh7

A very logical move. White needs to take the pawn on h7 — nothing else to do!



Another way to get the h7 pawn was to play 13.♗xh7+ ♔h8 14.♗e4 but now Black can equalize very easily by playing 14...♘xe4 15.♘gxe4 ♗b8 and Black is even more than fine. He has the bishop pair, an open position and an eventual attack on the White king. This is great compensation for just a pawn.

13...♘g4

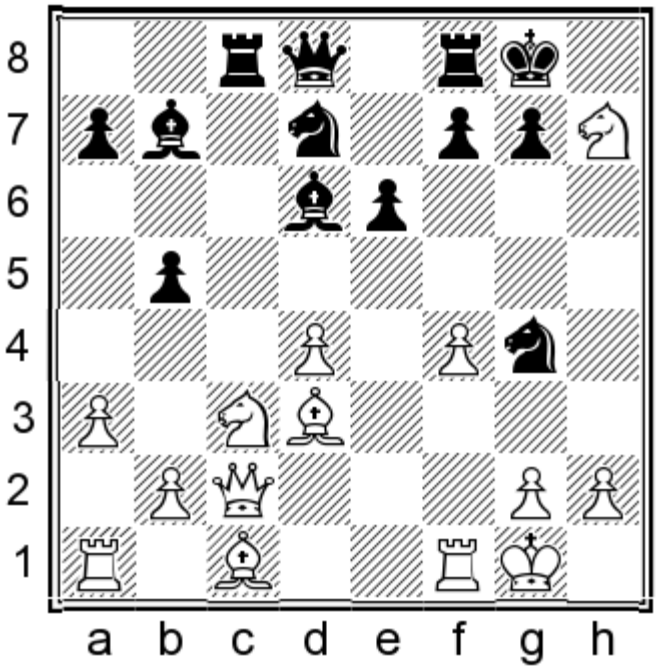
The beginning of a great mating idea!

14.f4

Aronian runs head first into Anand's preparation. 14.g3? would be a bad way to defend. 14...cxd4 (*14...♕h4*) 15.exd4 ♘xh2 and Black is easily winning. White can't take on h2 because of ♕h4.

14.h3 would have been a very possible reply, but here Black has excellent play as well. 14...♕h4 with a dangerous attack.

14...cxd4 15.exd4

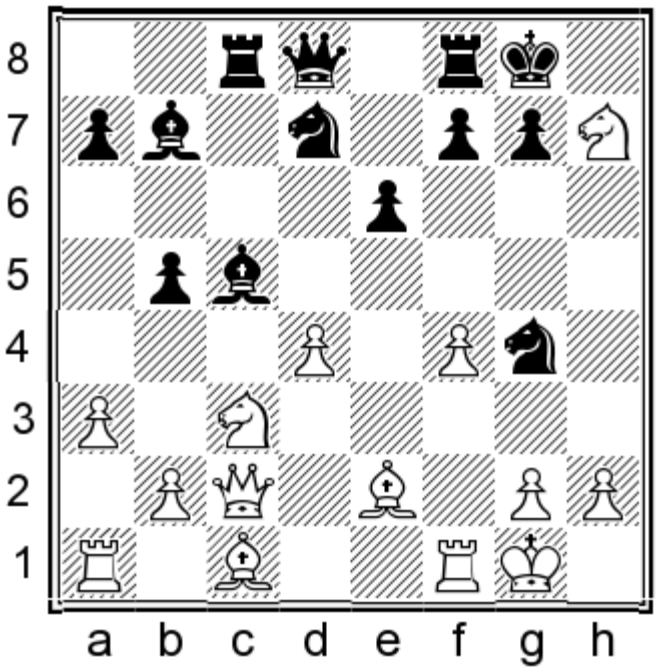


It seems like White is pretty solid and the Black rook on f8 is under attack. How to proceed? Anand has an amazing move in his pocket. What a level of preparation!

15...♗c5!!

A really amazing move, and a winning one. I guess it might become the move of the Year 2013!

16.♗e2



If White takes the bishop, it wouldn't help much. 16.dxc5 ♘xc5 Black wants to take on d3 and, at the same time, to give a check on d4. White has no decent defense against this. 17.♗e2 ♕d4+ 18.♔h1 ♘f2+ and Black is giving mate.

16.♘xf8 leads to a beautiful mate: 16...♗xd4+ 17.♔h1 ♕h4 18.h3 ♕xh3#

16...♘de5!!

Another wonderful move! Black creates multiple threats and keeps the knight on g4 alive. A really beautiful position.

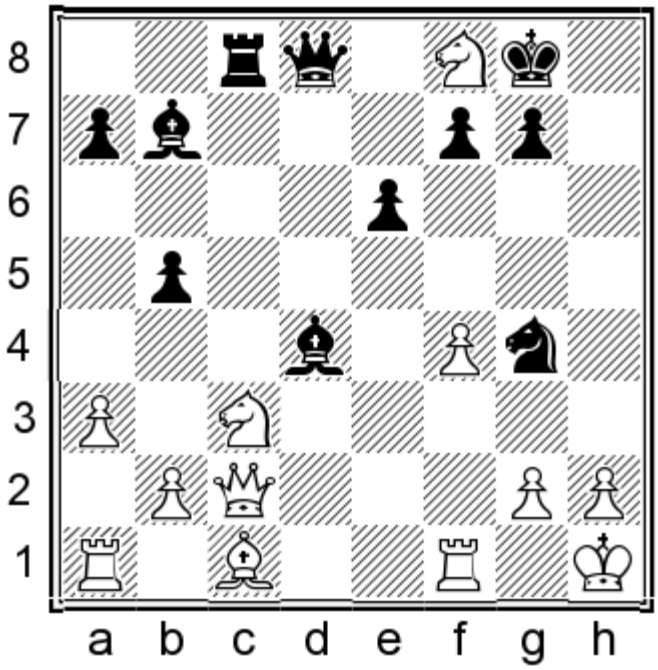
17.♗xg4

17.fxe5 and Black is mating after 17...♕xd4+ 18.♔h1 ♕g1+ 19.♖xg1 ♘f2#

17...♗xd4+ 18.♔h1 ♘xg4

As we can see, things have turned out terrible for White. At the moment, we have equal material and Black is attacking the White king with all his pieces.

19.♘xf8



If it’s impossible not to die, at least let’s get some material.

19...f5!

Another very good move! Black wants to mate after ♕h4. Of course not 19...♕h4? 20.♕h7+!

20.♘g6

White has protected himself from ♕h4 for a moment.

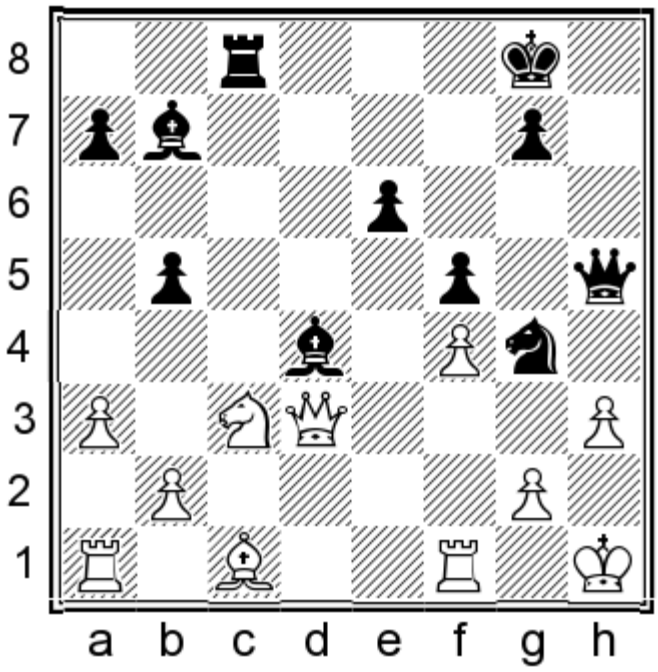
20...♕f6

And the game is basically over. Black wants to play ♕xg6 and ♕h5 next. White has no defense against this.

21.h3 ♕xg6 22.♕e2

Nothing helps White anymore...

22...♕h5 23.♕d3



23...♗e3

What a great finish to a really amazing crush by Black. Anyway, it would be very interesting to know if Anand made any of the moves himself or if it was his preparation until the very end!

0–1

GAME 14
A. Giri (2720)
F. Caruana (2781)
75th Tata Steel GpA Wijk aan Zee NED (11.6)
25.01.2013, [D31]
Annotated by Balogh Csaba

Caruana had a horrible tournament in Wijk aan Zee. He was playing very badly and, typically, he was risking too much in the opening to save some rating points. This led to another disaster from his point of view. On the other hand, Giri played a great attacking game.

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 c6 4.♘c3 dxc4

These kind of lines are generally a good way to fight for the win as Black. He takes a pawn and White must fight for compensation; if he doesn't succeed, he'll end up with a material disadvantage.

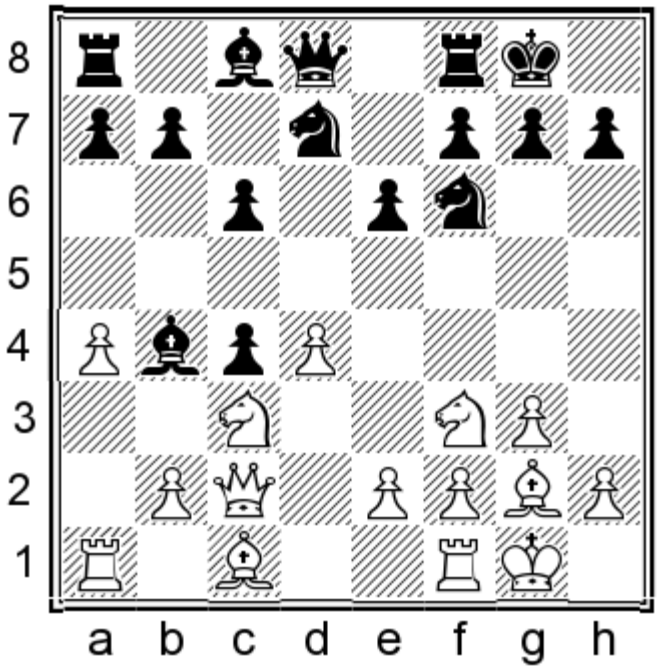
5.a4 ♗b4

Black would like to defend his pawn with b5 after pinning the knight. 5...♘f6 leads to the Slav by transposition.

6.g3

Giri plays in Catalan style and fianchettoes his bishop.

6...♘f6 7.♗g2 ♘bd7 8.0-0 0-0 9.♕c2



9...♕a5

Caruana deviates from the main line and tries to get his opponent out of his preparation. 9...♕e7 is the main move, with the idea of freeing the position with e5! White should prevent it if he wants to fight for an advantage. 10.♗f4! followed by e4, ♖fe1, ♖ad1 and d5. This is a typical method of finding counterplay in such structures. On 10...♘d5 11.♗g5! White provokes a weakness. 11...f6 12.♗d2 and e4 is coming next with strong compensation.

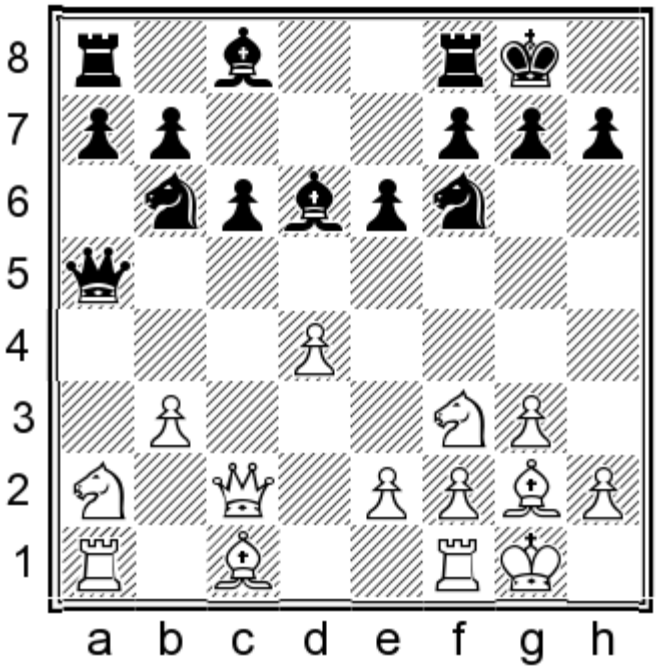
10.♘a2 ♗d6 11.♕xc4

White won back the pawn, but it allowed Black to free his position with e5.

11...♘b6?

This is the move which would never occur had Caruana been doing well in the tournament. However, he is now going to grab a poisoned pawn on a4. 11...e5 was necessary, although White got an edge in a game between two Serbian GMs. 12.b3 ♘b6 13.♕c2 The difference between 9...♕e7 and this is the queen, which is misplaced on a5. Black has to waste some time to get it out from the danger zone. 13...exd4 14.♘xd4 ♕h5 15.e4! White is in time to build a nice center. 15...♗h3 16.♗xh3 ♕xh3 17.f3 ! Everything is protected and the pawn structure guarantees an advantage for White. 17...♗e5 18.♗b2 ♖fd8 19.♖ad1. After finishing development, White had only one thing to do in the game Ilincic-Blagojevic game: to improve the a2 knight, but this could be easily achieved by ♘c1–e2.

12.♕c2 ♕xa4 13.b3 ♕a5



White has to play fast to create counterplay. He must make use of the a5 queen, which is almost trapped. It can only run to h5.

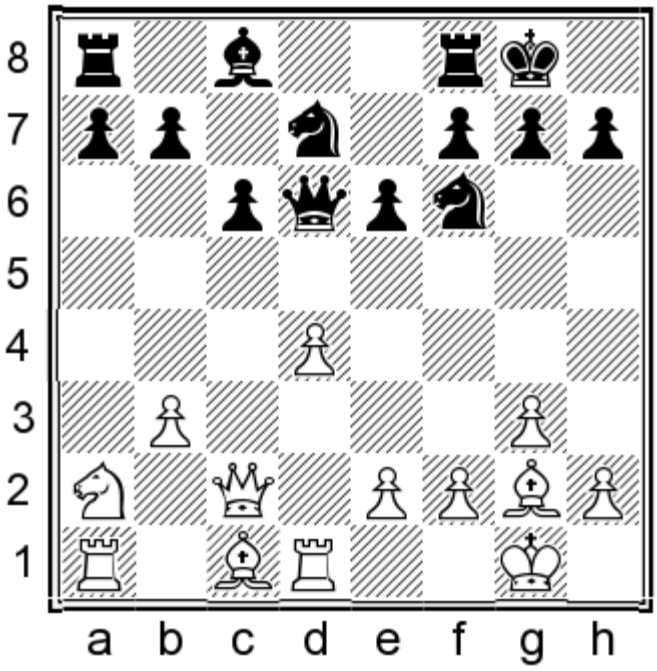
14.♘e5!?

Cutting the queen's route to h5. 14.e4! was even better. White threatens to play e5, and on 14...♗e7 15.♘g5!! is very strong. The main idea is to push e5, but this time it's connected with the h7 mate; the second point is the queen on a5, which can't go to h5 now. 15...h6 The hunt for the queen can start now. 16.♗d2! ♕b5 (*16...♕a3 17.♘c3 ♕b4* transposes to ♕b5.) 17.♘c3 ♕b4 18.♘f3!+- simply retreating the knight and Black can't avoid the e5 and ♘d5 ideas. He is losing a piece.

14...♘bd7

Black finally frees his queen, but this allows the capture of the important dark-squared bishop. 14...♗xe5 would have been met with 15.♗d2! ♕b5 16.♘c3! ♕b4 17.dxe5± and the White knight is ready to occupy the d6 square.

15.♘c4! ♕c7 16.♘xd6 ♕xd6 17.♖d1



Black is really missing his bishop. White has much more than enough compensation on the dark squares. The main ideas are ♘c3, ♗a3 and e4. Black has serious problems with his development as well, as it's difficult to imagine a future for the c8 bishop.

17...e5

This is the best practical move, trying to get the c8 bishop into the game, but actually it only helps White to increase his advantage. Passively waiting with 17...♖d8 and ♘f8, ♗d7-e8 was objectively better, but it also guarantees long-term suffering.

18.♘c3!

Creating the threat of ♗a3!

18...exd4 19.♗a3 c5 20.e3!

This was the point of 18.♘c3. Now all the diagonals and lines are opening against Black. The bishop pair starts to work extremely well.

20...d3

Otherwise, exd4 and dxc5 were also very bad for Black.

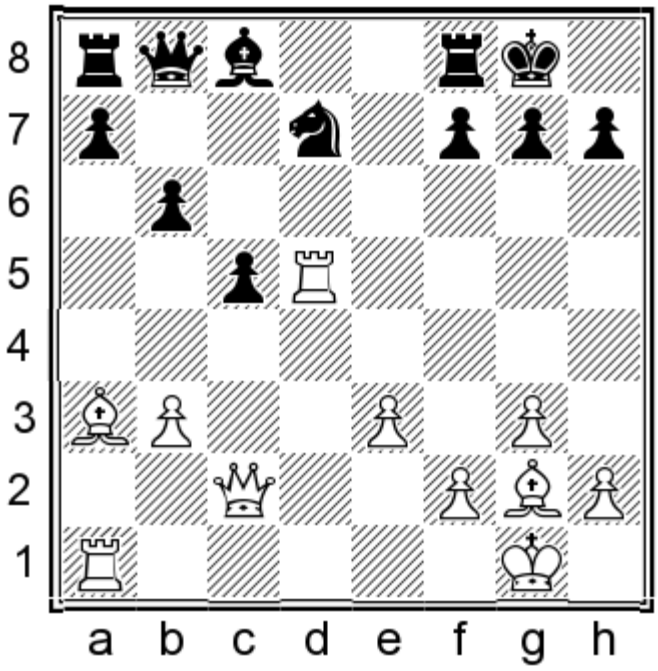
21.♖xd3 ♕b8

Ugly, but it was hard to find a good square for the queen. Caruana was thinking about an exchange sacrifice with b6 and ♗b7, and after ♗xa8, he might get some counterplay on the light squares. 21...♕e6 moves into 22.♘b5 when ♘c7 and ♘d6 are in the air. 21...♕e7 is met by 22.♘a4! and ♘xc5.

22.♘d5!

White launches a very strong attack against the king.

22...♘xd5 23.♖xd5 b6



24.♗b2!

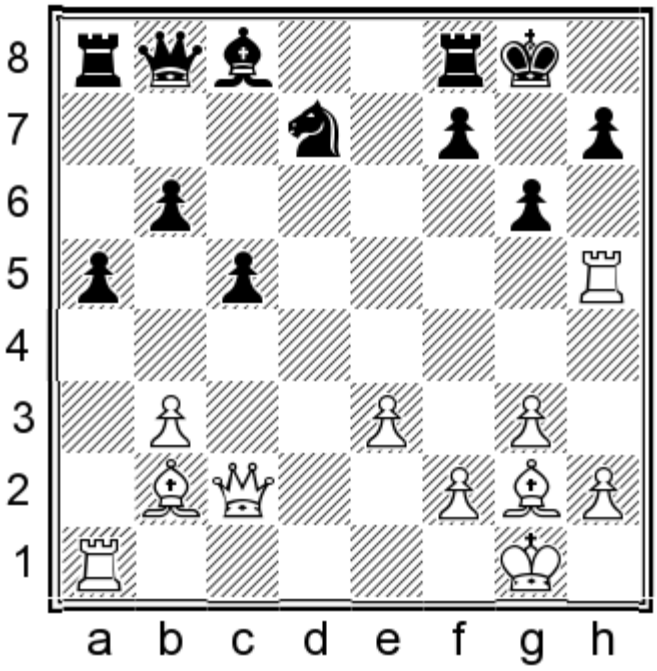
Logical and strong! Black has no pieces to defend the king. ♗b7 doesn't work because of the d7 knight, which has no place to move, while the attack is just rolling automatically.

24...a5

24...♖e8 with the idea of ♘f8 is also hopeless. White can win, for instance, with 25.♖ad1 ♘f8 26.♖d8+- winning a lot of material.

25.♖a4!

A nice move, switching this rook to the kingside as well. However, the computer win was really beautiful with 25.♖h5 g6



26.♕f5!! An amazing move, with the idea of ♖xh7, and on ♔xh7, ♕h3-♕h8 mates. The queen can't be taken because of ♖g5. 26...♕d6 27.♖xh7! and mate in a few moves.

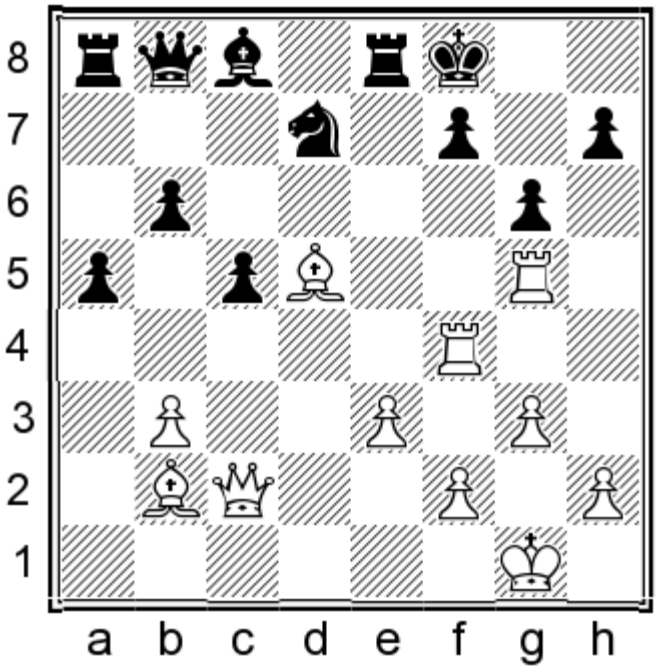
25...♖e8 26.♖g5 g6

A crucial weakening on the dark squares. On 26...♘e5 the easiest is 27.♗xe5 ♖xe5 28.♖xe5 ♕xe5 29.♗xa8+-

27.♗d5

White threatens with ♕c3 after preventing f6.

27...♔f8 28.♖f4



It’s enough! A nice crush by Giri. Such a final position rarely occurs against a 2780 opponent.

1–0

GAME 15
V. Kramnik (2801)
L. Fressinet (2706)
Alekhine Mem Paris/St Petersburg FRA/RUS (5)
25.04.2013, [A07]
Annotated by Balogh Csaba

A brilliant victory by Fressinet! We don’t see Kramnik losing in such style with the White pieces too often.

1.♘f3 d5 2.g3

After the Candidates tournament, Kramnik tried to play some “relaxing chess” and kept his deadly weapons for more important tournaments, but he got punished for that.

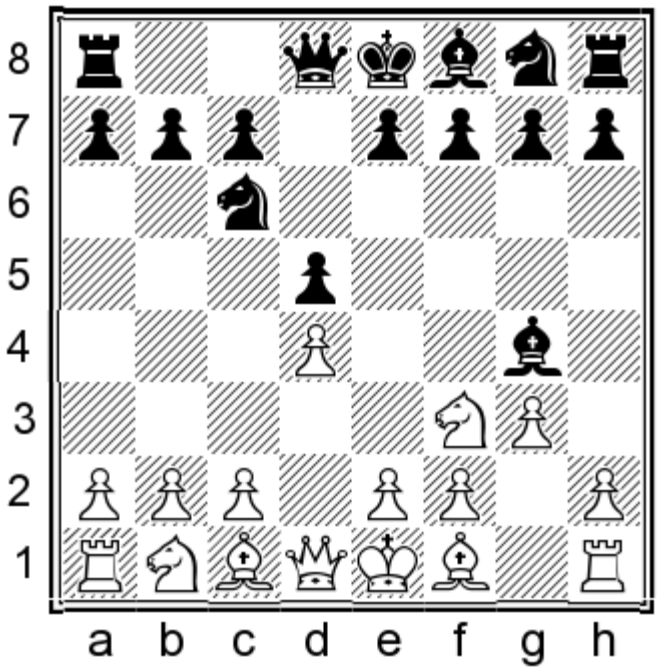
2...♘c6!?

A brave decision by Black. He transposes to the Chigorin Defense, which does not have a good reputation at all, especially if White does not play c4 quickly.

3.d4!

Otherwise, Black occupies the center with e5.

3...♗g4



4.♘bd2

A rare sideline, but it seems to be very strong. Black's plan in this whole setup is to castle queenside quickly after ♕d7, followed by an attack in center with e5. Or, if White castles kingside, he might launch a fast attack with h5-h4. However, White is ready for a quick attack as well, via c3-b4.

4...♕d7 5.h3!

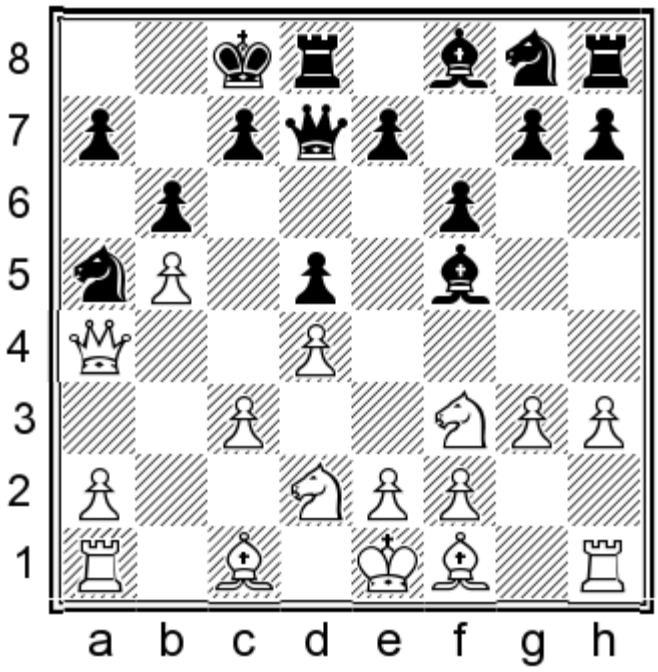
Preventing the trade of bishops with ♗h3.

5...♗f5 6.c3

Here comes the b4 plan. Black cannot prevent it with a5 since it does not fit into his strategy of castling long.

6...e5!

Black explodes the center. This is a typical plan in this opening, but it usually does not lead to anything good. Anyway, Black had to hurry with the counterplay, since after the slow 6...0-0-0 7.b4 f6 White gets a big advantage after 8.b5 ♘a5 9.♕a4 b6



10.♗a3! followed by ♗b4. We can see in these lines that it is more useful to have the knight on d2 to control the c4 square and be ready to play ♘b3, than to have the bishop on g2. Very deep understanding by Kramnik on move 4.

7.dxe5

7.♘xe5!? seems to give a nice advantage as well. 7...♘xe5 8.dxe5 0-0-0 9.♘f3 It is not clear how should Black fight to recover the pawn or to gain some compensation for it.

7...0-0-0

This is the point where Kramnik starts to lose the thread.

8.e3?!

This is just a waste of tempo, which is enough for Black to get counterplay. 8.♘b3! should have been played. 8...♘ge7

9.♘bd4 with a clear advantage for White!

8...♘ge7!

Black is in time to play ♘g6 now, and when he wins back the pawn, he is not worse anymore.

9.g4

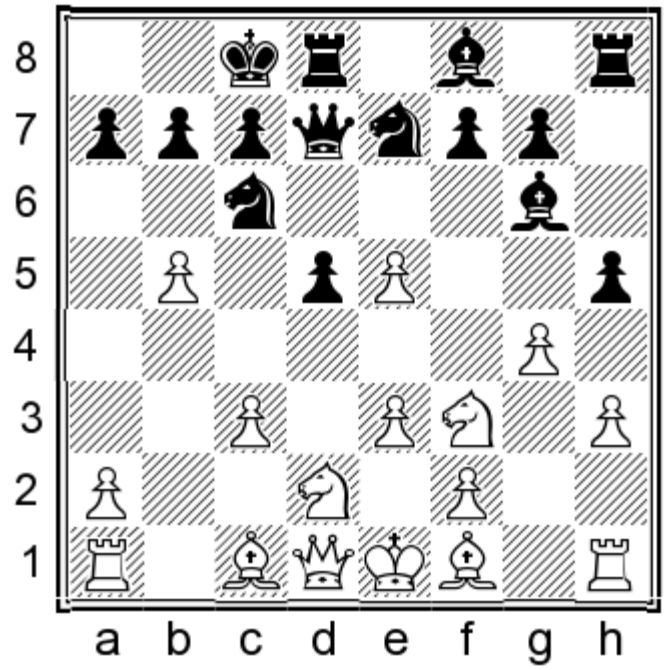
White tries to prevent ♘g6 by sending the Black bishop to that square, but this weakens his pawn structure and Black will be ready to make use of it with h5! 9.b4 is too slow now. 9...♘g6

9...♗g6 10.b4 h5!

Fressinet has already foreseen his sacrifice, which Kramnik had probably underestimated.

11.b5

Kramnik has pinned his hopes on this move. When the knight leaves, the e5 pawn is not under attack anymore and he will be able to calmly continue his plans. However, Fressinet had a different idea in mind!



11.♖g1 was better, but Black is fine anyway. 11...hxg4 12.hxg4 ♕e6 and ♘xe5 next move.

11...hxg4!!

Black gets two pawns for the piece, but they will dominate White's uncoordinated pieces.

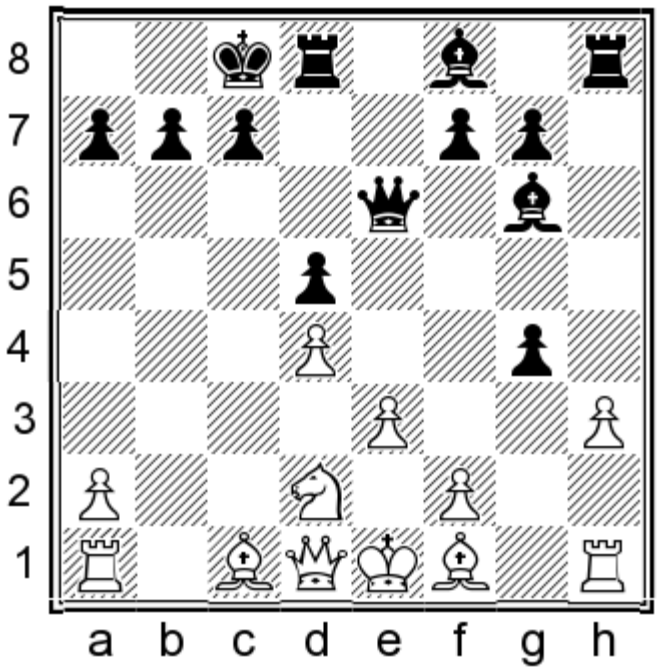
12.bxc6 ♘xc6 13.e6

White tries to exchange some pieces, but it does not solve his problems. 13.♘d4 ♘xe5 is also better for Black. White simply has no useful moves, while Black has many different ways to improve his position. He could do it by ♗e7-h4, or gxh3 is also possible to get a third pawn for the piece.

13...♕xe6!

The tempting 13...fxe6? would have been a grave error because White wins the g4 pawn after 14.♖g1!

14.♘d4 ♘xd4 15.cxd4



15...♗e7!

Another great decision! Fressinet realizes the plan of his opponent — to play ♕a4 ♔b8 ♗a3 -, and the trade of the bishops would seriously ease his position. He prefers to send his bishop into the attack with ♗h4. 15...♗b4! is also strong, suggested by the computer. ♗c3 threatens to trap the rook and after 16.♕b3 ♗xd2+ 17.♗xd2 ♗e4! 18.♖h2

(*18.♖g1 gxh3* White needs to give up his bishop for the pawn, but then he is simply lost.)

18...♕d6! Trapping the rook. White has an only move. 19.f4 Now on gxf3, ♖f2 works, but much stronger is 19...g3! 20.♖e2 ♕g6! and g2 is c oming next with a winning advantage. ♗g2 is answered by taking and ♖xh3.

15...gxh3?! allows White to play 16.♕a4 ♔b8 17.♗a3

16.♗g2

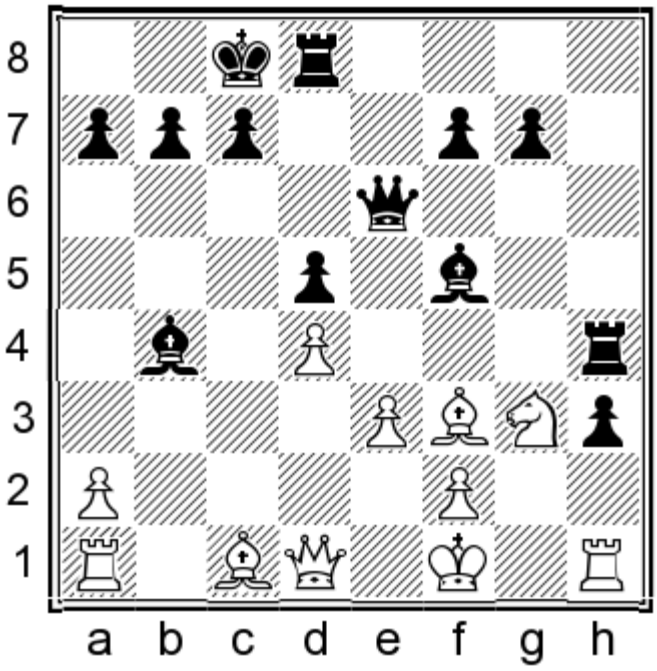
Forcing Black to take on h3, when the Black pawns become less flexible. On the other hand, it is going to be the third pawn for the piece. Now on 16.♕a4 ♔b8 17.♗a3 ♗h4! Black creates the direct threat of ♕xe3 and is ready to increase the pressure on the f2 pawn.

16...gxh3 17.♗f3 ♗f5

Black prepares to push g5-g4! White's position is getting more and more unpleasant. He is unable to create any counterplay on the queenside, as the b1 square of the rook is under permanent control by the bishop.

18.♕a4

I tried to defend the position with 18.♘f1 but it did not help. 18...♖h4! 19.♘g3 ♗b4+ 20.♔f1



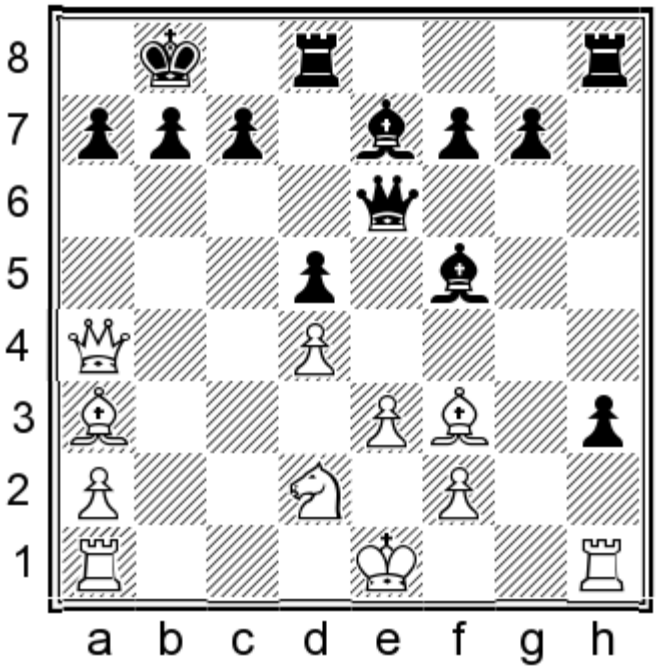
(*20.♗d2?* loses to *20...♖xd4!*)

20...♕g6!

(The idea of the defense comes after *20...♗c3?! 21.♗a3! ♗xa1 22.♗e7!!* Some kind of multi-attacking move. White is back in the game.)

21.♘xf5 ♕xf5 ♗c3 is threatened now and, for instance, after 22.♗b2 g5! g4-g3 is coming with a crushing attack.

18...♔b8 19.♗a3



19...♗h4!

Black follows his plan and keeps the bishops on the board. ♕xe3 is threatened and g5-g4 is coming fast as well. White

cannot create any serious threats without the rook on b1. ♗c5 is always met with b6.

20.♘f1 g5! 21.♖h2

White has to make ugly moves like this one. He strengthens his f2 weakness and also tries to blockade the h-pawn.

21...g4 22.♗e2 ♗e4

Black continues pushing. He wants to settle his bishop on g2, trapping the h2 rook and making the f2 pawn more vulnerable. According to the machine: 22...♖dg8! was even stronger with the deadly threat of g3 fxg3 ♖xg3.

23.♖c1

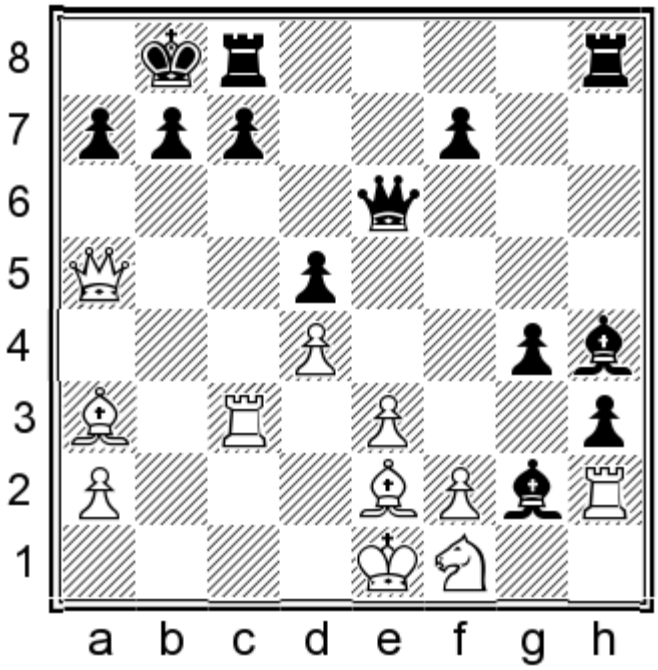
White appears to activate his rook, but actually he still unable to create any real threats. The three pawns on a7, b7, c7 cover all the potential of the queen, rook and two bishops.

23...♗g2 24.♕a5 ♖c8!

Black had to use a new defender, but he still has enough pieces left to break through on the other side.

25.♖c3

Kramnik tries something on the third rank, but it is still unclear what he really wants...



Fressinet finds the way to finish the game in style! Finally, White could have occupied the b-file, but this time it would have ran into 25.♖b1 ♗xf2+! 26.♔xf2 ♕f5+–+ and b1 falls.

25...♗xf2+!!

Not the only way to win, but definitely the nicest and most effective.

26.♔xf2 ♗xf1

Black simply wants -and will- promote his h- and g-pawns.

27.♔xf1

27.♗xf1 leads to mate after 27...g3+! 28.♔xg3 ♕f5! blocking the king’s path back to the f-file. 29.♖b2 ♖cg8+ 30.♔h2 Finally, White has some real threats, but Black is coming first! 30...♖g2+! 31.♗xg2 hxg2+ 32.♔xg2 ♖g8+ and mate to follow.

27...g3

What to do?! The pawns are rolling!

28.♗f3 gxh2

Black threats with ♕f5 ♔e2 ♕xf3 ♔xf3 h1=♕.

29.♔e2 ♖hg8!

with the idea of ♖g2, closing the bishop’s diagonal. On ♗xg2, simply hxg2, promoting the pawns.

30.♗c5 a6

30...b6 was also good.

31.♗h1 ♖g2+

If White does not take, ♕f5 mates.

32.♗xg2 hxg2

White resigned! A brilliancy by Fressinet and something that Kramnik should try to quickly forget.

0–1

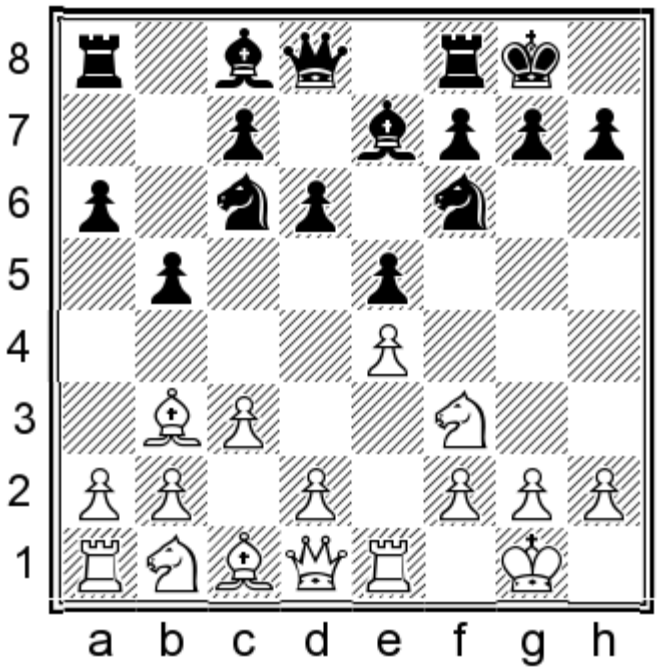
GAME 16
R. Ponomariov (2743)
P. Eljanov (2707)
82nd ch-UKR 2013 Kiev UKR (2)
16.06.2013, [C91]
Annotated by Balogh Csaba

An excellent piece of preparation by Ponomariov, which involved an intuitive pawn sacrifice that even the machines did not understand at first sight.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.♖e1

White returns to the mainlines instead of the recently so popular anti-theoretical move 6.d3.

6...b5 7.♗b3 d6 8.c3 0-0



9.d4

Ponomariov plays the alternative line to the main Spanish 9.h3. It is sometimes quite effective to search for improvements in slightly forgotten lines. Many hidden ideas can be found and the surprise effect on the opponent is also a decent factor.

9...♗g4

Black must try to put pressure on the center, otherwise White can simple spare the h3 move.

10.♗e3

This is the sharp handling of the position, while Kamsky's favorite 10.d5 is rather positional.

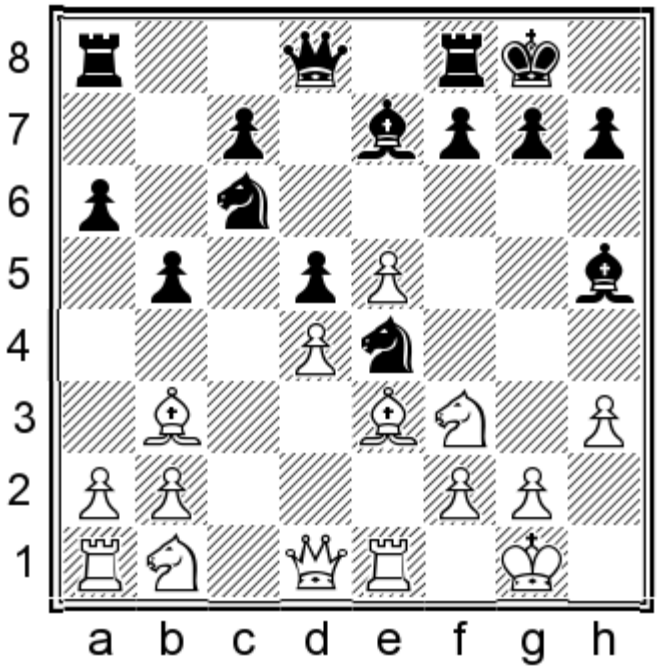
10...exd4

10...♘xe4? is often a poisoned pawn in the Spanish. Here again White wins after a double attack: 11.♗d5!

11.cxd4 d5

A typical method of countering White's ideas in the center. Otherwise if White gets his knight out to c3, Black remains without counterplay against the strong center. The other main option for Black is 11...♘a5 12.♗c2 and Black must play either c5 immediately or after the inclusion of the ♘c4-♗c1 pair of moves. Both come with huge theory.

12.e5 ♘e4 13.h3 ♗h5



Here comes the new idea! In the previous games, White played ♘c3 now or without the h3 ♗h5 inclusion.

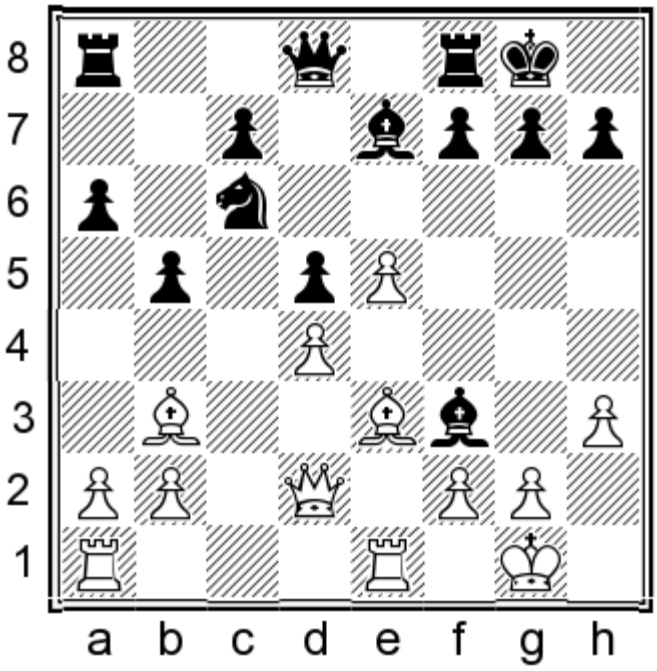
14.♘bd2!

The positional point is obvious, White needs to get rid of the strong e4 knight, but it looks like a tactical blunder...

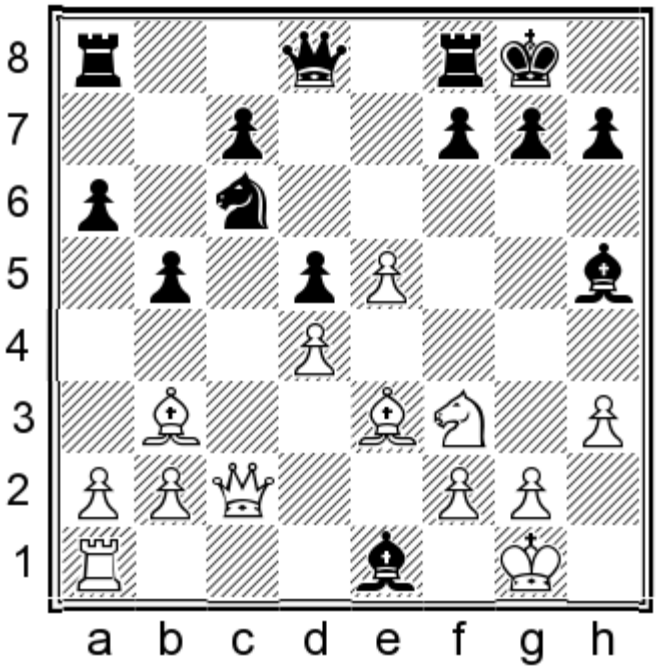
14...♘xd2

Seemingly White has no good takeback, since on ♗xd2 the d4 pawn is hanging and after ♕xd2 ♗b4 wins an exchange. Black can even destroy the pawn structure first with ♗xf3 and only then ♗b4. What could the plan be?!

15.♕xd2! ♗xf3



On 15...♗b4 16.♕c2 ♗xe1



17.♘g5! is very strong 17...♗g6 18.♕xc6 ♗a5 19.♗xd5 White has sacrificed an exchange, but he got the most important d5 pawn and all his pieces are standing actively. Black is already in some trouble, because after 19...♖b8 20.e6! seems to be very strong.

16.♕c3!!

This is the whole point! White had to make this intermediate move to avoid ♗b4. The game becomes very sharp, but as the following line shows, White has enough compensation everywhere. 16.gxf3 is bad as after 16...♗b4 17.♕c2 ♗xe1 18.♕xc6 ♗a5 19.♗xd5 ♖b8∓ Black has huge pluses in comparison to the 15...♗b4 line.

16...♗xg2

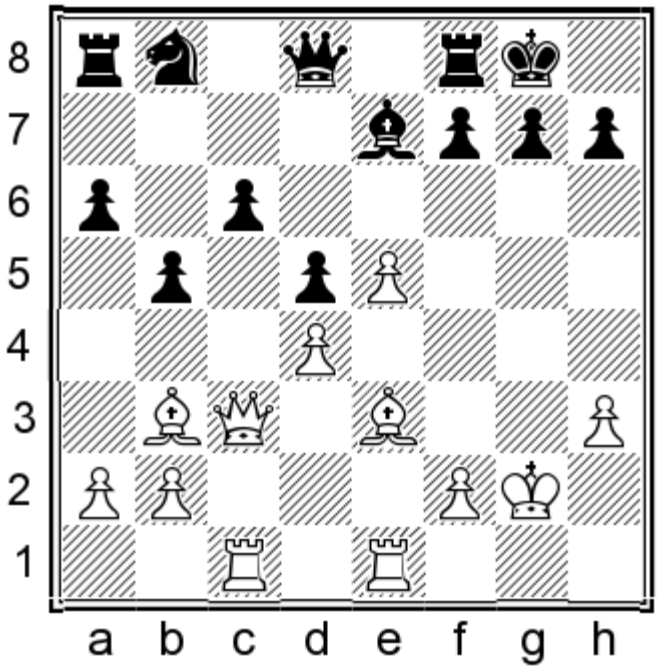
Eljanov plays the computer's recommendation and grabs a pawn. After knowing what happened in the game, I doubt that he would repeat this decision. On 16...♕d7 White needs to make another subtle intermediate move: 17.♖ec1!! ♘b8 Now on ♕xc7, Black could simply retreat the bishop.

(*17...♘d8 18.♕xc7! ♕xc7 19.♖xc7* And both bishops are hanging. White wins the piece back and gets a big advantage.)

18.gxf3 c6 19.♔h2 We get the same position as in the game, but here Black does not even have an extra pawn.;

16...♗b4! is the best option in my opinion. 17.♕xc6 ♗xe1 18.♖xe1 ♗e4 19.f3 ♗f5 20.♗xd5 White clearly has enough compensation for the exchange, but I am not sure if objectively he is better here. In any case, from a practical point of view, White has a much easier game. 16...♘xe5 seems to lead to a slightly worse position after 17.dxe5 ♗h5 18.g4! ♗g6 19.♖ed1 ♗e4 20.♕c6 White wins the pawn back and his pieces are better placed.

17.♔xg2 ♘b8 18.♖ac1 c6



Black managed to win a pawn, but at what cost!? White has the bishop pair, the c6 pawn must always be defended by the b8 knight, which locks the rook to the corner. If the c6 pawn falls, the d5 one will automatically drop as well. And the most important factor is that White has an easy and strong attack on the g-file, against which Black cannot launch any kind of counterplay. Black must try to defend, but without the b8 and a8 pieces it is going to be difficult.

19.♔h2!

Opening the g-file for the rooks.

19...f5

19...a5 does not lead anywhere, White can simple continue his plan: 20.♖g1. Opening the game weakens the Black king too much: 19...f6 20.♖g1! fxe5 21.dxe5± Black has no good defence against ♕d3-♗c2.

20.♖g1 ♖a7

Using the poor rook to defend the g7 weakness along the 7th rank is a resourceful idea, but it does not save Black. 20...f4 critically weakens the b1–h7 diagonal: 21.♗d2 ♕d3 and ♗c3 are coming next and Black will collapse as he is

missing a light-colored bishop.

21.♖g2!

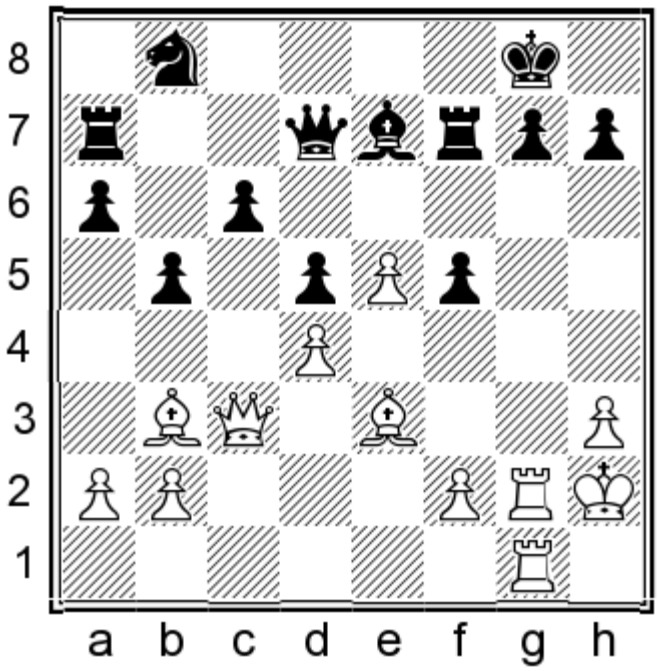
Simple and strong!

21...♕d7

21...♕e8 is also bad: 22.♖cg1 g6 23.♗h6 ♖f7 24.♗c2 White wants to prepare for the attack with h4-h5 and ♕g3 for instance. After 24...♗f8 25.♗xf8 ♕xf8 26.h4! ♕h6 27.♕h3 ♔f8 28.h5 Black collapses.

22.♖cg1 ♖f7

Black tries to keep his pawn on g7 as long as possible to avoid the h4-h5 plan.



23.♗d1!!

A very nice way of increasing the pressure. Ponomariov drives his bishop to h5 to provoke the g6 weakening.

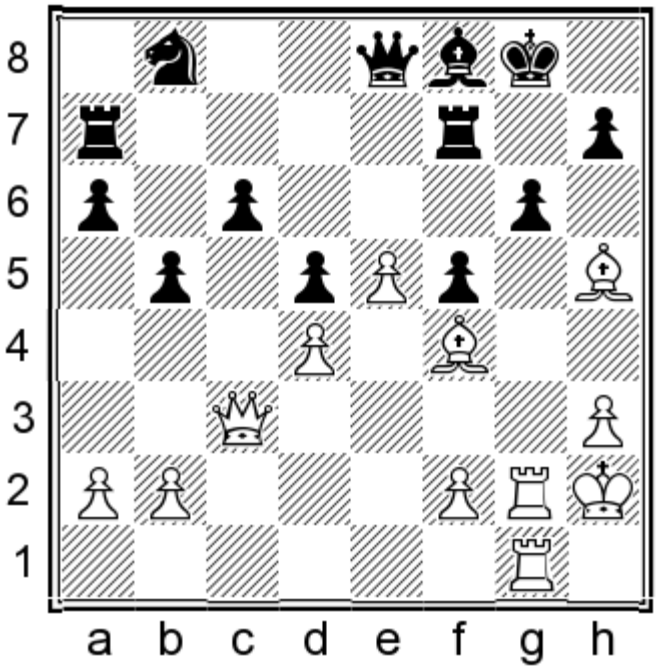
23...g6 24.♗h5!

White does not even waste time on the h4-h5 plan, he goes for the most direct crush by sacrificing on g6.

24...♗f8 25.♗f4!

Opening the 3rd rank in order for the queen to join the attack.

25...♕e8



Black cannot fortify his g6 pawn: 25...♖g7 26.♗h6! ♖f7 27.♗xg6! hxg6 28.♖xg6+ ♔h7 29.♗xf8 ♖xf8 30.♕g3+- with mate to follow soon.

26.♖xg6+!!

A brilliant finish based on exact calculation!

26...hxg6 27.♖xg6+

Black is simply unable to coordinate a defence because of the pin between the h5 bishop and the e8 queen.

27...♗g7

On 27...♔h7 28.e6! ♖fe7 29.♖g5 ♕d8 30.♗g6+ ♔h8 31.♕g3 Black is a rook up, but gets mated soon. Too many threats are in the air: ♕h4, ♖h5, ♗f7, ♗e5.

28.e6 ♖f8 29.♕c5

White could already have simplified to a completely winning endgame 29.♖xg7+ ♖xg7 30.♗xe8 ♖xe8 31.♗xb8 ♖xb8 32.♕xc6+- but Ponomariov played for more.

29...♕e7

On 29...♖e7 30.♖xg7+ ♖xg7 31.♗xe8 ♖xe8 32.♗e5+- is hopeless for Black.

30.♗d6 ♕h4 31.♕xa7

There is only one check on f2 because of ♖g2. A very well deserved victory after deep preparation and a powerful attack.

1–0

GAME 17
G. Kamsky (2741)
S. Mamedyarov (2775)
FIDE World Cup 2013 Tromso NOR (4.1)
20.08.2013, [B47]
Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

We are in the 1st game of the 4th round of the World Cup. Only 16 players are left and the matches are getting more-and-more tense, every games importance becomes greater and from time-to-time players tend to take more “safe” decisions. This does not count for Kamsky. In a great attacking game he managed to mate Mamedyarov, who has been playing just great chess in the last few months, winning almost everything he could.

1.e4

Kamsky also plays 1.d4, which makes the preparation harder.

1...c5

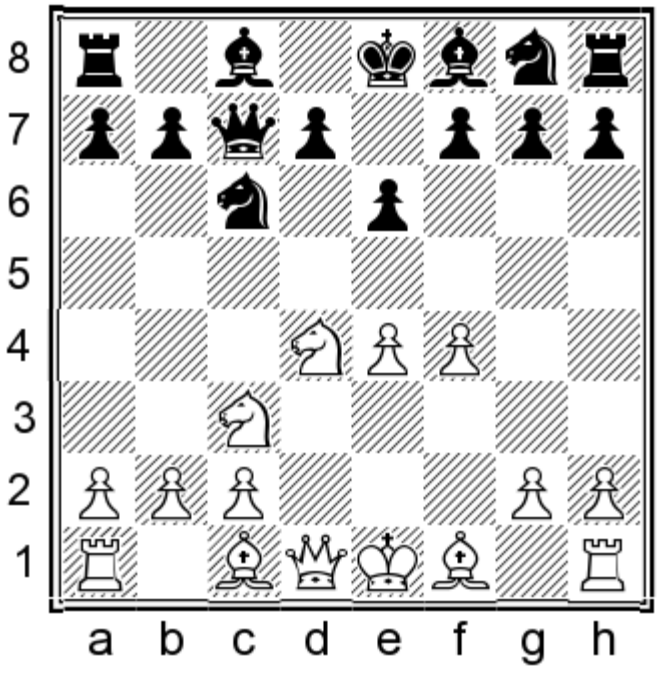
Mamedyarov also plays 1....e5, but it seems that he is ready for a heavy fight.

2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘c6

The Paulsen with 4...♘c6 is not a rare opening at all. Lately Black has been achieving quite solid results with it.

5.♘c3 ♕c7 6.f4

I like to play this move myself as White. The main line is 6.♗e3.



6...d6

I dont think 6...d6 should be counted as the main danger for White, as he is now getting a nice version of a Sheveningen. 6...♘xd4 and;

6...a6 are the two critical continuations.

7.♗e3

Leaving White with both castling options open.

7...♘f6 8.♕f3

I think that 8.♗e2 followed by ♕d2, 0-0-0 and g4 can also be unpleasant for Black.

8...a6 9.♗d3!

With this move Kamsky makes it clear that he is going for a short castle and wants to achieve some sort of Sheveningen position with a tempo up.

9...♗e7 10.0-0 0-0 11.♔h1

Now we are totally in the Sheveningen, but with a very nice version for White. Usually White has to play ♗e2 first and then ♗d3 loses a tempo. I think that by now it is clear that something went very wrong for Black in the opening.

11...♗d7

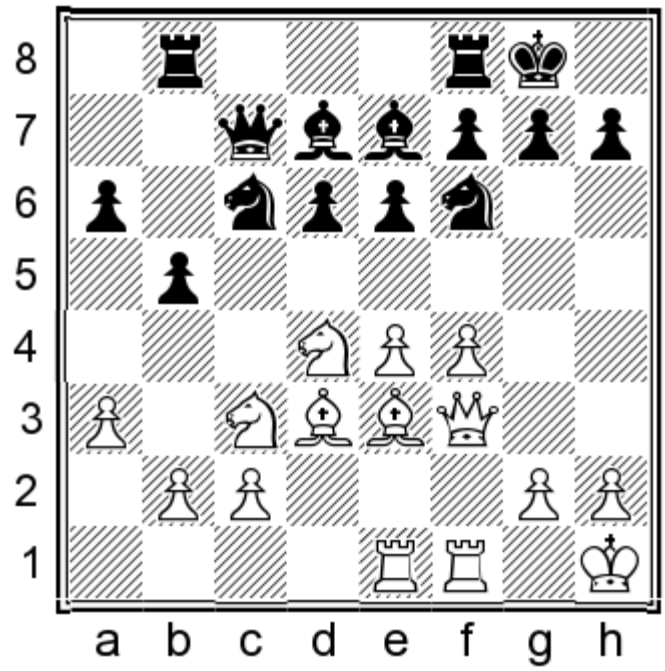
Black is preparing the b5 move.

12.♖ae1 b5 13.a3!

A very good positional move. Before taking action in the center, White needs to secure the position of the knight on c3.

13...♖ab8?!

Very risky play by Black. Already being in a bad version of the opening, Black should clearly have paid much more attention to White's attacking ideas and a move like ♖ab8 doesn't help in the defence.



13...♖fe8 would have been a more solid choice.

14.♘xc6!

Another very strong move. Now Black is almost forced to play ♗xc6 and the white queen on h3 is going to take up a perfect spot.

14...♗xc6 15.♕h3

White wants to push e5 as well as f5. Things are getting very dangerous around the black king.

15...♖fd8

A logical move with the idea of pushing d5, but maybe again a move like ♖fe8 would have been more careful.

16.♗d2!

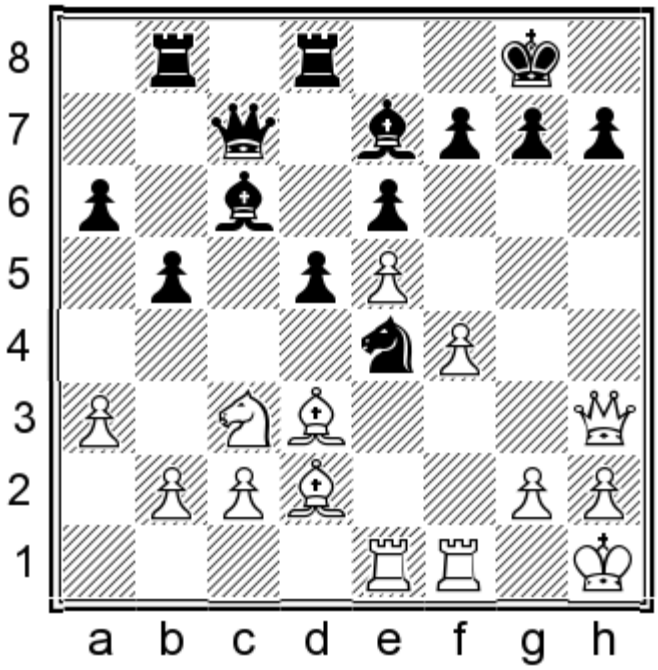
Another very strong positional move, based on exact calculation. Immediate pushes would not bring White much, so Kamsky is preparing the deadly e5.

16...d5

Black already didn't have much of a choice. 16...g6 17.f5 and White's attack seems to be very strong as well.

17.e5 ♘e4

It seems like Black is fine, but of course with the move 16.♗d2! White was preparing an atomic bomb on Black's kingside...



18.f5!!

This was the point behind all of White's play. Of course 18.♗xe4 could only be good for Black.

18...♘xd2

Mamedyarov accepts the challenge and actually Black didn't have anything better. The greedy 18...♕xe5 19.♘xe4 dxe4 20.♗c3 leads to an almost lost position on the spot. 18...exf5 was not much better either: 19.♕xf5 ♖f8 20.e6 and White has a huge advantage.

19.fxe6

White wants to mate by playing ♕xh7.

19...♘e4

At first sight it looks like Black is more or less solid.

20.exf7+ ♔h8

How to open the black position now?!

21.♘xd5!

Another very nice move. I am sure that Kamsky saw it all before playing 16.♗d2. The US Grandmaster really seems to be in top shape.

21...♗xd5 22.♖xe4

This is why 21.♘xd5 was so important. The white bishop on d3 is alive and helps in the continuation of the attack against the black king.

22...g6

Clearly the best defence. Black is making space for his king on g7 and tries to create a blockade on the dark squares.

23.♖ef4?!

A very logical move, but quite a serious mistake. White should have been more careful to guarantee himself the e6 move: 23.♖e3 Followed by e6, with a big advantage.

23...♔g7?

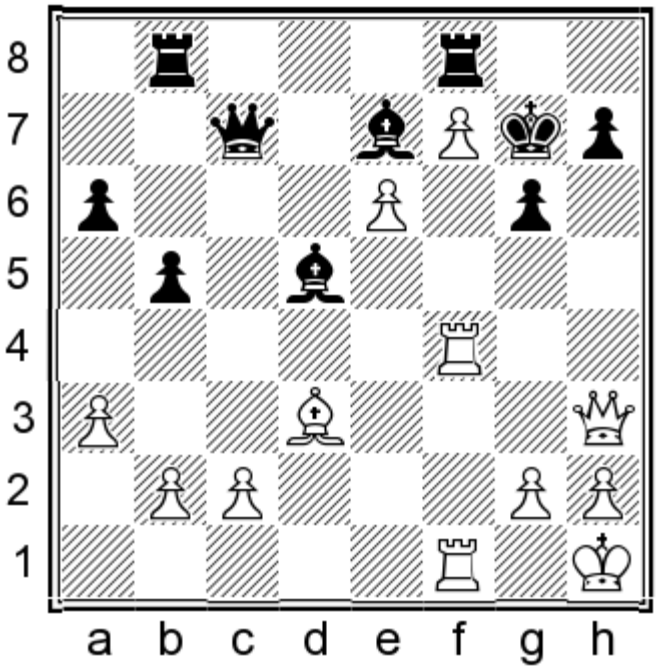
And Black also misses his chance with a very human move... 23...♕c6! would have turned the game around completely. The position would be very unclear. White has no e6 which means that the f7 pawn could eventually get lost in the future if Black managed to consolidate with ♔g7-♖f8. The position remains very sharp.

24.e6

White has connected his pawns, so the game is now almost over.

24...♖f8

White wanted to play f8=♕ and ♖f7 with mate.



25.♕e3!

A very strong move! Black cannot control the d4 and e5 squares at the same time, which means his position is just lost!

25...♗c5 26.♕e1

Now the weak spot is the c3 square.

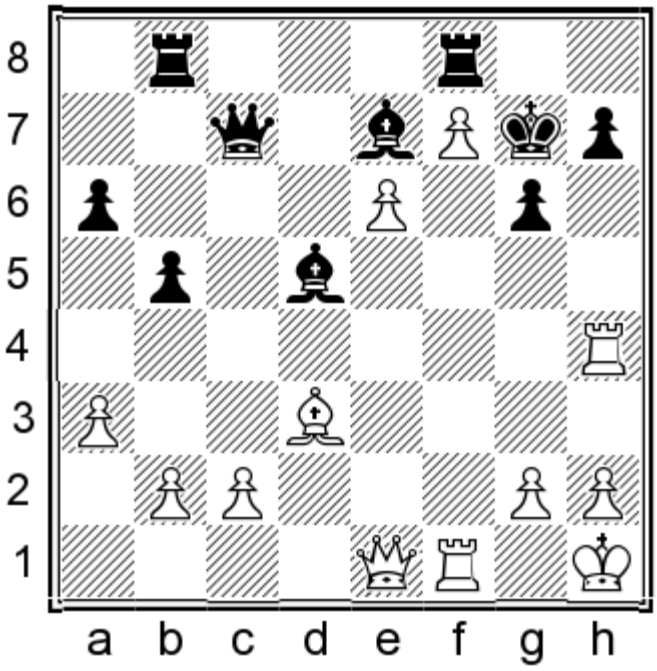
26...♗d6?!

Black is making it a bit too easy for White. After 26...♗e7! White would have to crack a much harder nut to win the game. 27.c4! looks like White is going to mate, but it is not so. 27...bxc4 28.♕c3+ ♔h6 The black king is one step away from mate, but this step is hard to make. At least there is no easy way of finishing the game. 29.♗xc4 with “just” a big advantage for White.

27.♖h4

Now the game is over. White wants to mate by playing ♖xh7-♕h4 and ♕f6.

27...♗e7



28.♕e3!

With the double threat of playing ♕h6 and ♕d4.

28...h5

28...♗xh4 also leads to mate after 29.♕d4+ ♔h6 30.♕xh4+ ♔g7 31.♕f6+ ♔h6 32.♖f4+-

29.♕d4+ ♔h6 30.♖xh5+

Now after 30...♔xh5 31.♕xd5 ♔h6 White has a wide choice of winning moves, one of them is 32.♕e4 and the pawn on g6 is going to fall. A really fantastic game by Kamsky!

1–0

GAME 18
A. Naiditsch (2710)
F. Vallejo Pons (2706)
TCh-ESP CECLUB Honor 2013 Linares ESP (6.3)
13.09.2013, [C03]
Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

Playing against Paco is always very interesting. He is a very creative player with a lot of original ideas. So for this game I was sure I would get a chaotic position on the board and it happened just as expected.

1.e4 e6

The French is Vallejo's main opening.

2.d4 d5 3.♘d2

I decided to play the safer line 3.♘d2, usually I am going for the main 3.♘c3.

3...♗e7

Not the main line, but quite an interesting move. Black is waiting for White's reply before playing ♘f6.

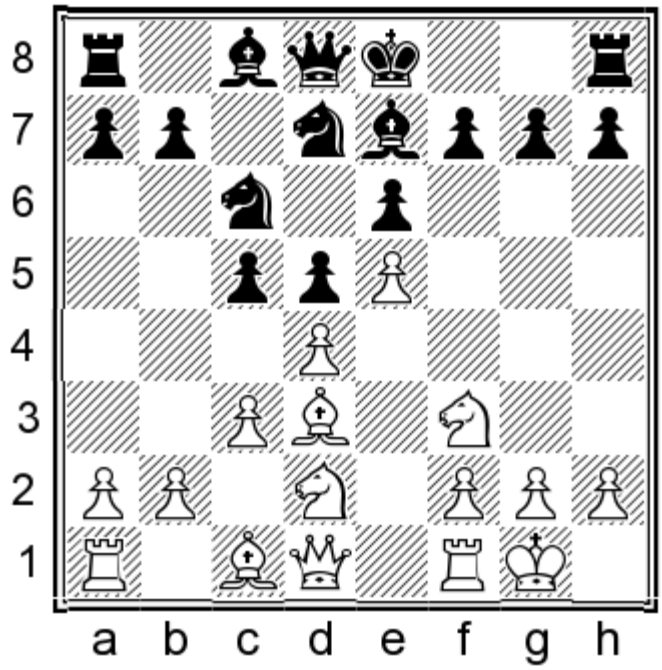
4.♘gf3

4.♗d3 c5 I played this line a couple of times and maybe Black is just doing fine here.

4...♘f6 5.e5 ♘fd7

Black's idea is now becoming clear; White doesn't have the usual setup with ♗d3-♘e2 and now the knight on d2 is a bit out of play.

6.♗d3 c5 7.c3 ♘c6 8.0-0



8...a5!?

And as usual Paco is playing very creatively. 8...g5 This is the main line here, with very sharp play and an unclear position after 9.dxc5

9.♖e1

I am not sure about this move at all. Maybe it is better for White to play 9.a4 but the position is also quite unclear after 9....cxd4 10.cxd4 ♘b4.

9...cxd4!

A very strong move. Black is immediately going for the d4 pawn.

10.cxd4 ♕b6

White has difficulties protecting the d4 pawn. It is not unusual in this line that White sacrifices the pawn, but I think that from Black's point of view it is already an achievement to have a very unclear position on move 10.

11.a4

I probably need to give up the d4 pawn anyway, so I thought I should secure the ♗b5 move for later on.

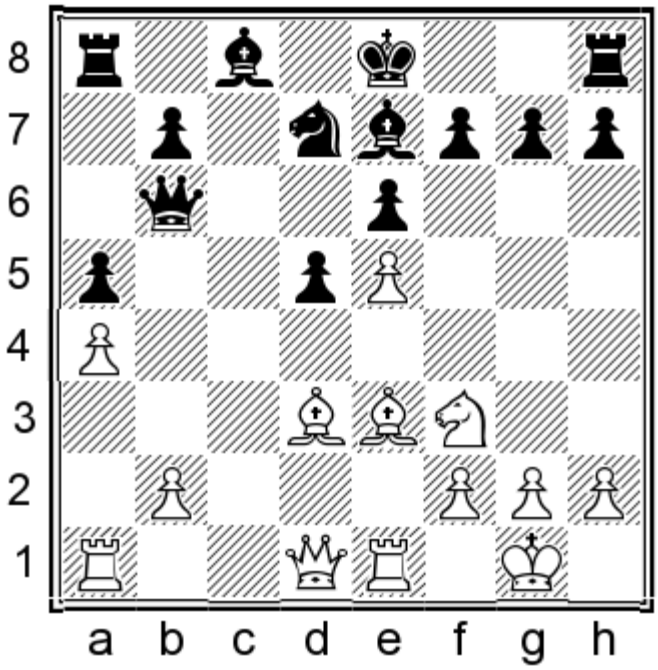
11...♘xd4 12.♘xd4 ♕xd4

I think this is the first critical position. Black is a clear pawn up but I have better development, so I was thinking for quite a while about whether to play 12.♘b3 or 12.♘f3 here.

13.♘f3

I finally went for this move just based on my gut-feeling. 13.♘b3 ♕b6 14.♗e3 ♕d8 15.♕h5 would also lead to very unclear play.

13...♕b6 14.♗e3



14...♘c5!

A very strong move. After 14...♕d8 15.♕c2! attacking the h-pawn and followed by ♖ac1 would give White very nice play.

15.♗b5+

I probably don't have anything better. 15.♖c1 ♗d7 followed by ♖c8 and it is hard to see where White's compensation for the pawn is.

15...♗d7 16.♗xd7+ ♔xd7 17.♘d4

At least I got the black king to d7 in return for my pawn sacrifice, which is already something.

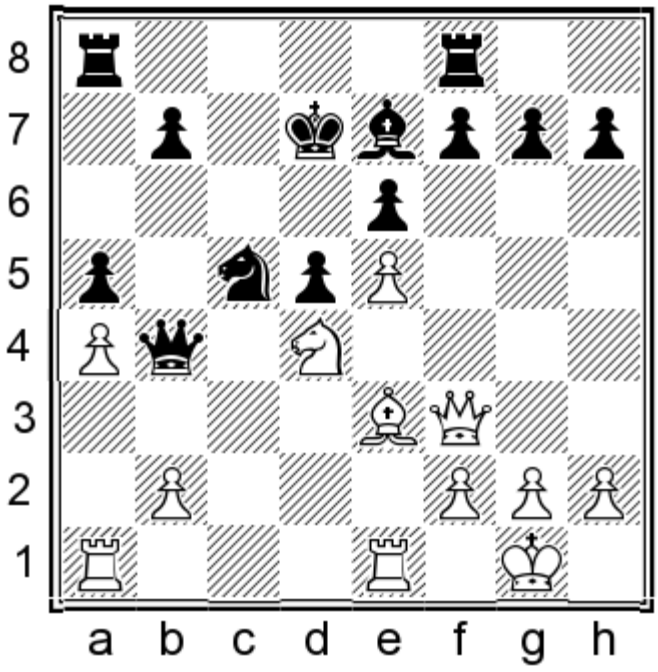
17...♕b4!

Another very good move. Of course Black should not leave the queen in a passive position on b6. I wanted to play ♘b5 next.

18.♕f3

I have to act quickly, as in case Black manages to get a stable position I will be doing very badly. It is really hard to break such a strong pawn structure.

18...♖hf8

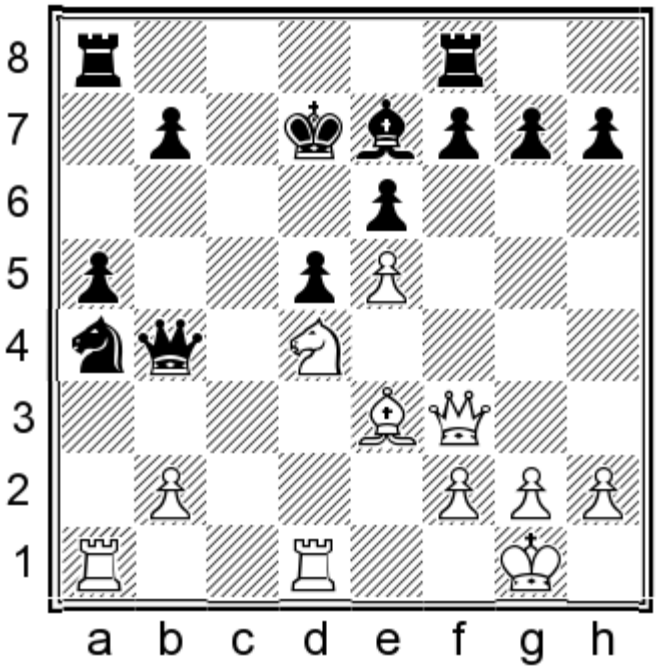


19.♖ed1!

A nice move. I am preparing to play ♘f5 next, or in many lines a move like ♘b5 followed by ♖xd5 could also be very dangerous for Black.

19...♘xa4?

A clear miscalculation by my opponent. Now things start to look very nice for me.



During the game I was very afraid of the following move: 19...♖ac8! And what to do now for White?! 20.♘f5 doesn't seem to work and it is hard to create a direct threat. The position of course remains unclear, I can go for 20.♕h3 or 20.b3, trying to fix things first, but somehow I didn't feel comfortable here. It could all just end with a pawn down for nothing for me.

20.♘f5!

An easy to find move, as I didn't really have anything else to play! Now things are getting very forced.

20...♘xb2

If you say A, you have to say B!

21.♖xd5+

Of course!

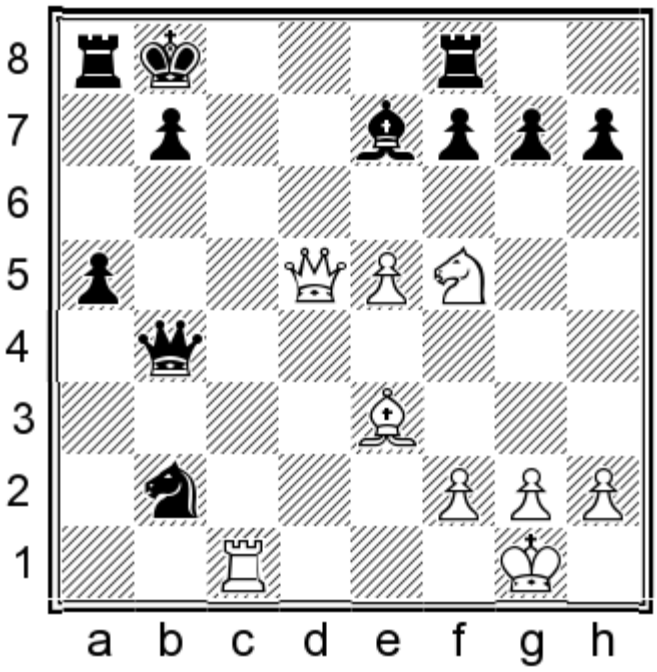
21...exd5 22.♕xd5+ ♔c7

Here I had a long think, calculating the move 23.♖c1 of course, but also the move 23.e6.

23.♖c1+

A good choice. 23.e6 is a possible move, but it leads to a completely messy position. 23...♖a6 And here I was not sure how to evaluate the position. There are so many different options, but one shouldn't forget that White is a full rook down.

23...♔b8



24.♘xe7?!

I played this move instantly, because I had already planned it when I played 20.♘f5, but I should have had a second think. 24.♕d7! would end the game on the spot! Black has no decent defence against ♕c7. 24...♘c4 25.♘xe7 ♖a6 26.♘d5 and White is easily winning.

24...♕xe7

24...♖a6 didn't help as after 25.♕d7 ♘c4 26.♘d5 White is winning.

25.♗c5

White is of course winning here too, but things are not as simple as after 24.♕d7.

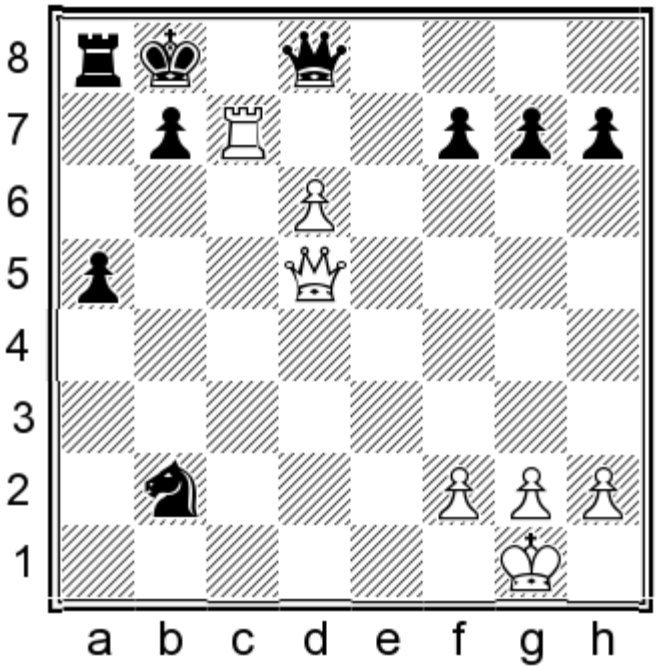
25...♖d8

The best defence. 25...♕e6 would lead to a nice mate: 26.♗d6+ ♔a7 27.♕xa5#

26.♗d6+ ♖xd6 27.exd6 ♕d8

27...♕e6 just loses to 28.♕xe6 fxe6 29.d7 ♔a7 30.♖c8

28.♖c7!



Probably the simplest way of finishing the game. White still needs to be careful though as Black's a-pawn could become very dangerous.

28...♖a7 29.♕xf7

Simple and strong. I want to play ♖e7 next and Black has no decent defence against it.

29...♘d3

After 29...♕xd6 30.♖d7 White is winning. Not much better is 29...♘c4 30.♕xc4 b6 31.♖c6 and here too only a miracle could save Black.

30.♖e7

♖e8 is coming next.

30...♖a6 31.♖xb7+

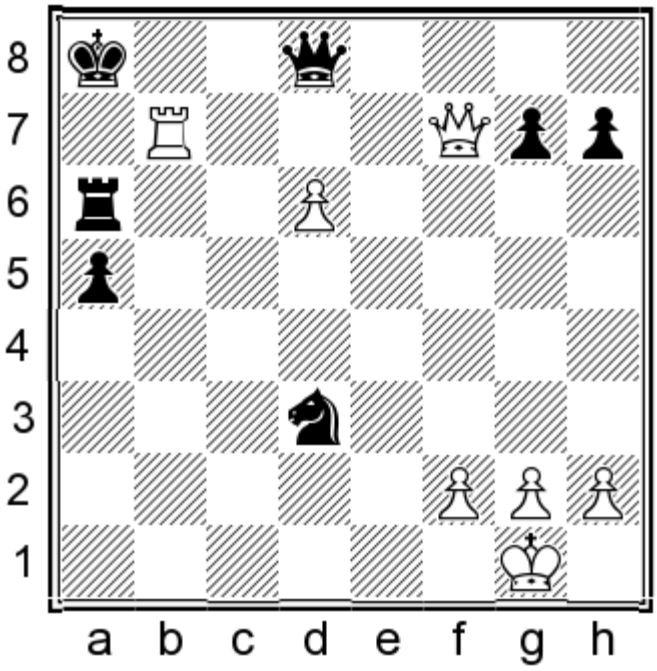
31.♖e8 ♖xd6 would leave Black with some hopes.

31...♔c8

Here I was down to 5 minutes, so I decided to repeat the moves once in order to win some time and come closer to move 40.

32.♖c7+ ♔b8 33.♖b7+ ♔a8

Well, it makes no big difference...



After 33...♔c8 I was planning to play 34.♖b5 ♕xd6 35.♕b7+ ♔d8 36.♖d5 with an easily winning position.

34.♖d7!

The last important move! Now the game is over.

34...♕c8 35.♖c7

White threatens to play ♕f3 or ♕d5 next. All in all a nice finish of a pretty game! :)

1–0

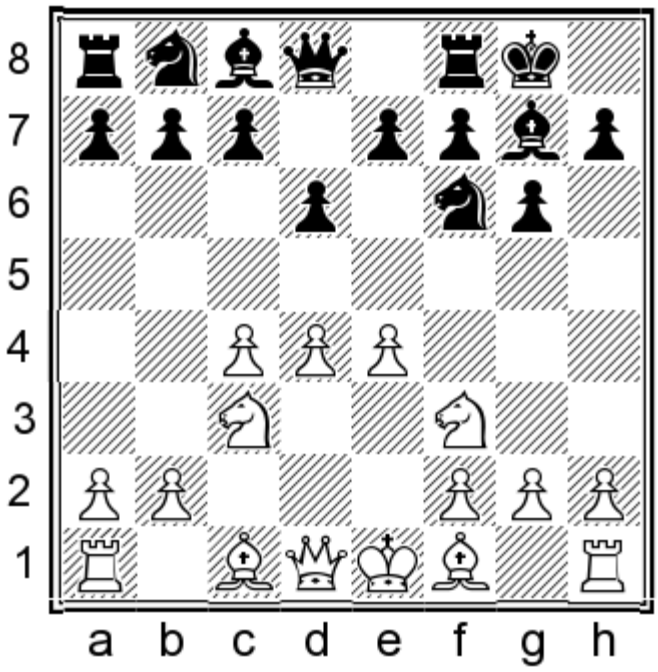
GAME 19
I. Nepomniachtchi (2717)
R. Ponomariov (2756)
ACP Cup 2013 Riga LAT (3.4)
15.09.2013, [E90]
Annotated by Balogh Csaba

Ponomariov was in a must-win situation to equalize the match. Nepomniachtchi employed the right strategy of not playing for a draw, but instead playing his usual chess.

1.c4 g6 2.♘c3 ♗g7 3.d4 ♘f6

Black needs an asymmetrical position to play for a win and the King's Indian defence perfectly fits this criteria.

4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0-0

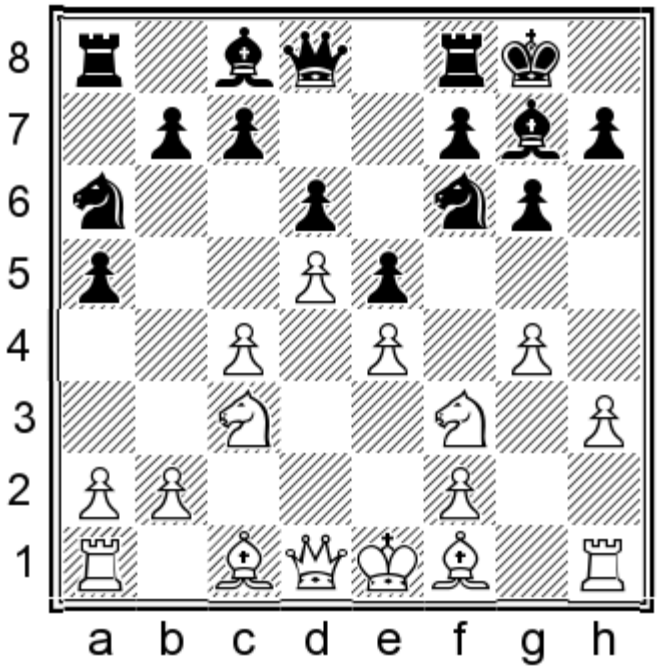


6.h3

Many top grandmasters have started to employ the 6.h3 system. It seems like a decent try for White to play for an advantage nowadays.

6...♕e8

A sideline. Ponomariov wanted to get Nepomniachtchi out of his preparation. 6...e5 7.d5 a5 is the main line and here the development of the theory also shows that 8.g4 is a very interesting move for White. 8...♘a6



9.♗e3 White's main idea is to follow up his development with ♗e2, ♘d2 and then an attack with h4-h5. The g4 move is good prophylaxis against Black's favorite f5 break, since then White usually takes twice on f5, followed by occupying

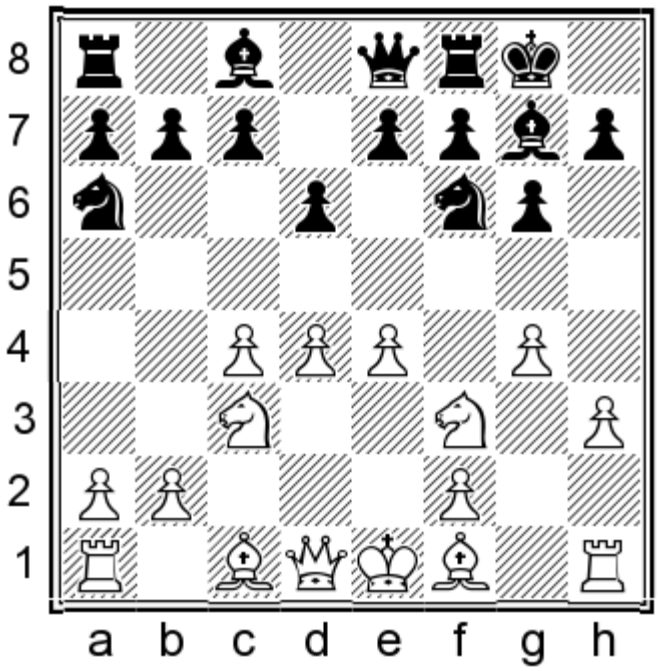
the e4 square with a knight (♘d2-e4), which will exert really secure control over the position.

7.g4!

♕e8 in the King's Indian is always connected with the e5 move. Nepomniachtchi continues the g4 plan, since after e5-d5 he was about to push g4 anyway. Ponomariov decided to change his mind and went for another plan.

7...♘a6

Black intends to play c5 and in case of d5, open the position with e6, which would give even more purpose to the ♕e8 move.



8.♗g5

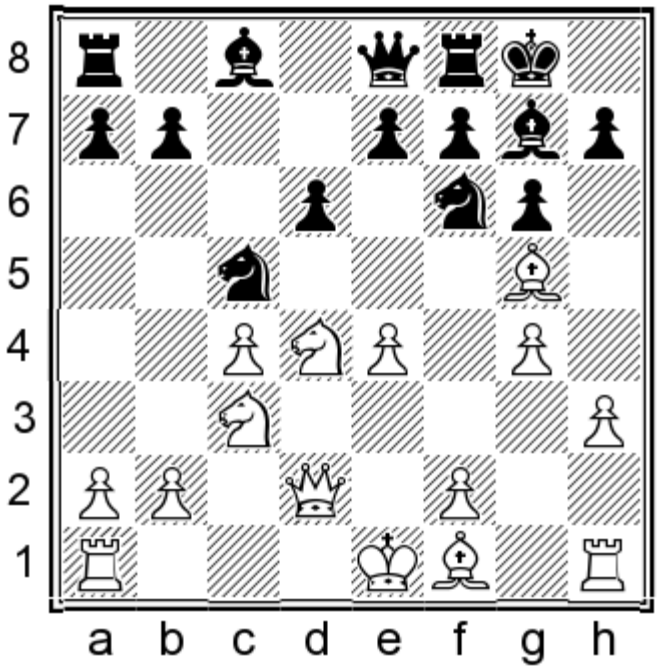
In such positions, White generally tries to trade the strong g7 bishop by playing ♗e3-♕d2 and ♗h6. This ♗g5 move is an improved version of this, since from Black's point of view the bishop is quite disturbing on g5, while to send him back with h6 would seriously weaken the pawn structure and also give White a clear target after ♗e3 and ♕d2.

8...c5 9.♕d2

We are still following theory. White delays the d5 push, since he comfortably holds the center after cxd4 ♘xd4.

9...b6

This is the novelty. Some games continued with 9...cxd4 10.♘xd4 ♘c5



11.f3 which is exactly what White is playing for. White intends to quickly finish development with ♗e2 and ♖d1 to prepare for any kind of central breaks and then he could launch a very dangerous kingside attack with h4-h5. Black is lacking adequate counterplay and he is suffering from less space.

10.♖d1 cxd4

If Black plays 10...♗b7 then White already pushes 11.d5 because Black has spent two tempi to develop the bishop to b7, where it suddenly becomes completely misplaced.

11.♘xd4 ♗b7 12.f3!

Consolidating the center! White soon launches an attack with h4-h5.

12...♘c5 13.♗h6

Trading the defender fits excellently with the attacking plan of h4-h5.

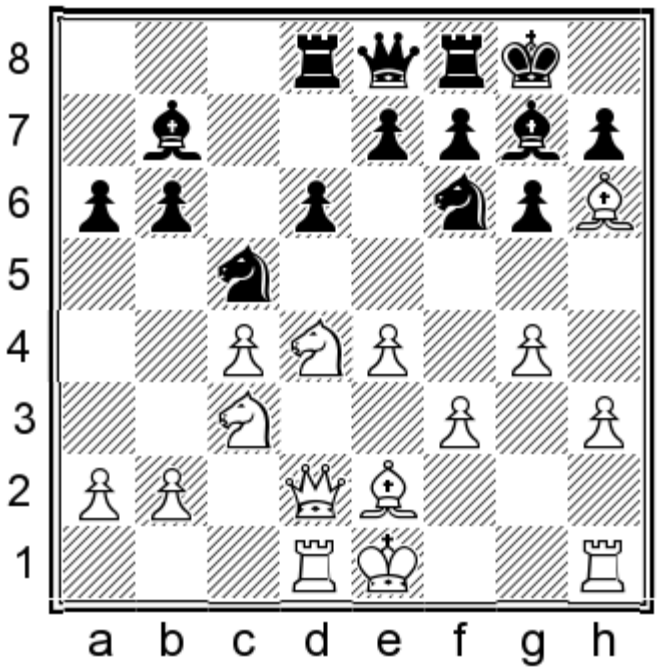
13...a6

As the game shows, Ponomariov was hoping for a central break with e5 or e6-d5, but for this he had to lose another tempo on preventing ♘db5.

14.♗e2

The final preparation. White closes the x-ray between the e8 queen and the e1 king.

14...♖d8

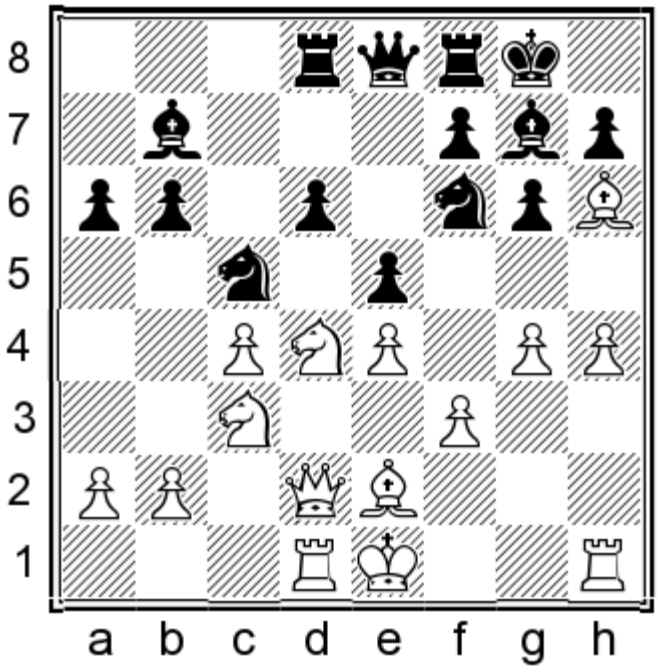


15.h4!

Here it is finally!

15...e5

This move allows White to finish the game in style!



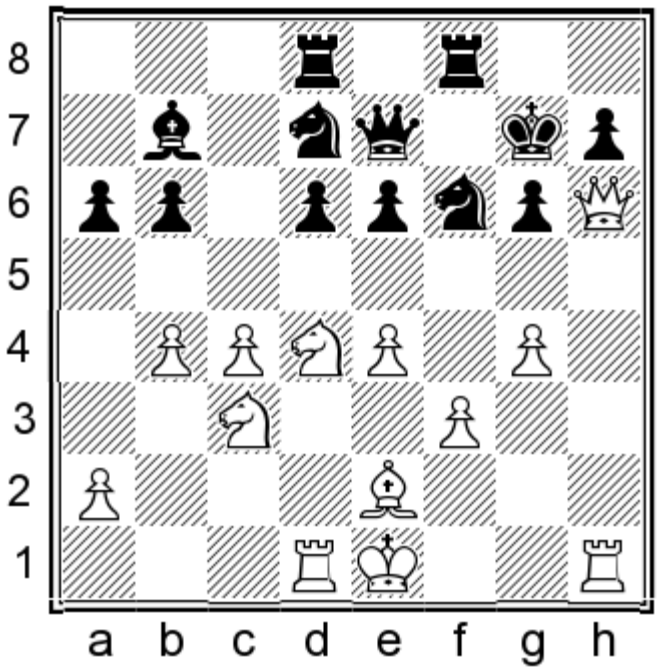
15...e6 was a better chance, although it is also quite bad, but at least Black does not get mated. 16.♗xg7 ♔xg7 17.h5 ♕e7 With the idea of taking back with the f-pawn on g6 and to cover the h7 pawn with the queen.

(*17...d5?* is premature because of *18.cxd5 exd5 19.♕g5+-* Black cannot avoid h6 or ♘f5.)

18.b4 ♘cd7

(*18...♔g8!* is the only move, since bxc5 is not a threat as long as the queen is pinned on the d-file.)

19.hxg6 fxg6 20.♕h6+



20...♔g8 White wins after 21.g5! ♘h5

(*21...♘e8 22.♘xe6+*- Deflecting the queen.)

22.♖xh5! gxh5 23.♘xe6 White crushes!

16.♘f5!

An obvious sacrifice after which Black is helpless.

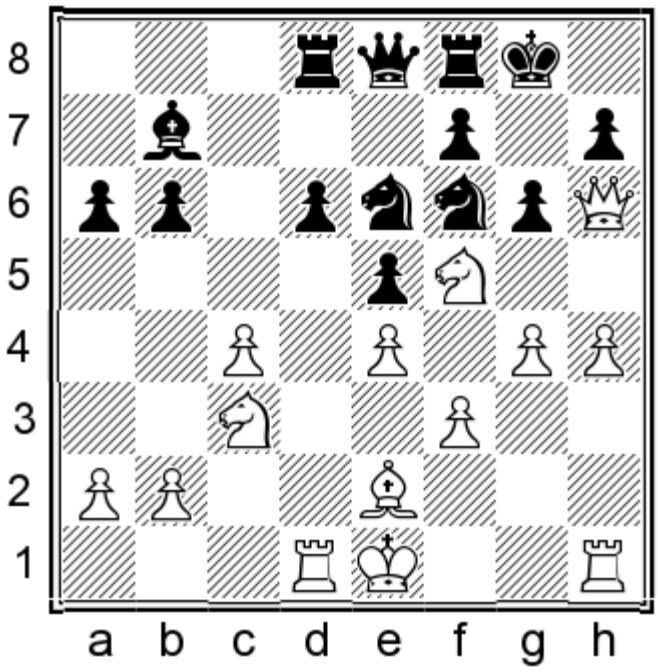
16...♗xh6

16...gxf5 loses to 17.♗xg7 ♔xg7 18.♕g5+ ♔h8 19.♕xf6+ ♔g8 20.gxf5+- and ♖g1.

17.♕xh6!

The f5 knight is still protected indirectly, so White creates a mate threat.

17...♘e6



17...gxf5 18.♕g5+! ♔h8 19.♕xf6+ ♔g8 20.gxf5+-

18.♘d5!+-

Another strong attacking move! White wants to get rid of the e6 knight. Now he threatens to deflect it by playing ♘c7 and of course also ♘xf6, while if Black takes on d5, cxd5 and the e6 pawn is under attack.

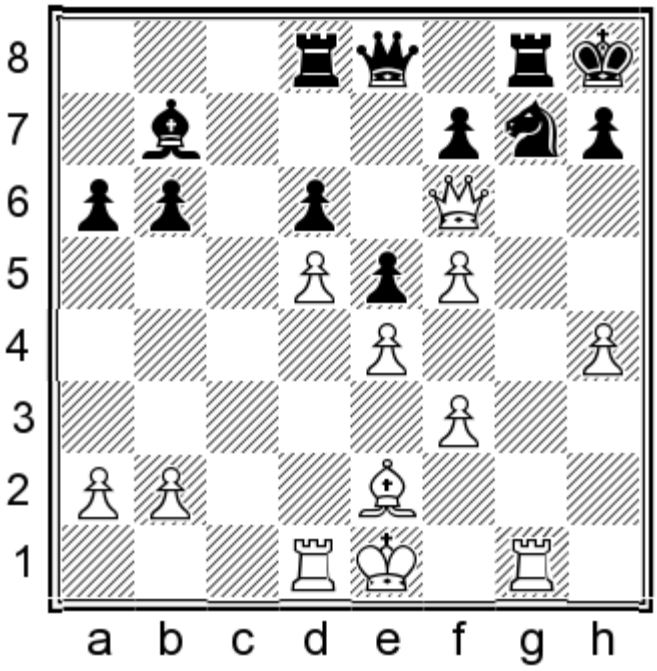
18...♘xd5 19.cxd5 gxf5

Otherwise White would simply play dxe6.

20.gxf5 ♔h8

Nepomniachtchi finds the most brutal way to finish the game:

21.♕f6+ ♘g7 22.♖g1 ♖g8



23.h5!

Black resigned in view of 23.h5 ♕f8 24.h6 and Black has no more moves. White might finish the game, for instance, with ♔f2 followed by doubling his rooks on the g-file. Ponomariov preferred to resign the game than to allow White to have a lot of fun in this total zugzwang position.

1–0

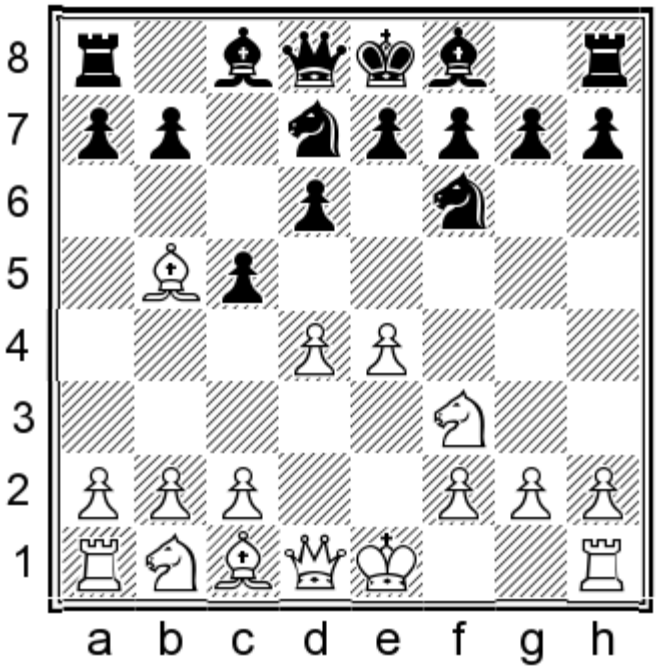
GAME 20
E. Alekseev (2710)
I. Krush (2492)
Baku Open 2013 Baku AZE (3.4)
21.09.2013, [B51]
Annotated by Balogh Csaba

We are now going to see a brilliant game from the Baku Open!

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.♗b5+

Alekseev usually aims for less theoretical positions, where he can outplay his opponents later on.

3...♘d7 4.d4 ♘gf6



5.0-0

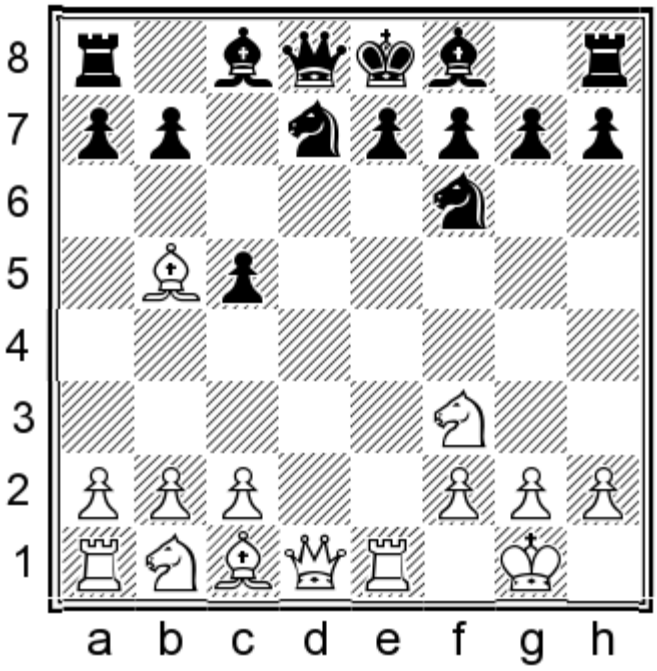
The previous move probably came as a surprise for Black and she takes the brave decision to accept the pawn. 5.♘c3 is the main line, but the text move involves a very tricky pawn sacrifice.

5...♘xe4

Black should play more carefully with 5...cxd4 6.♕xd4 and here he can choose between some playable options, like 6...a6 (*6...g6*; or *6...e5*)

6.♖e1 ♘ef6 7.dxc5 dxc5

It is interesting that Irina Krush had already played this position once back in 1999. Her opponent then played 8.♗g5, but she managed to preserve her extra pawn and later won the game. Alekseev came up with a highly aggressive improvement, although it is not the novelty yet.

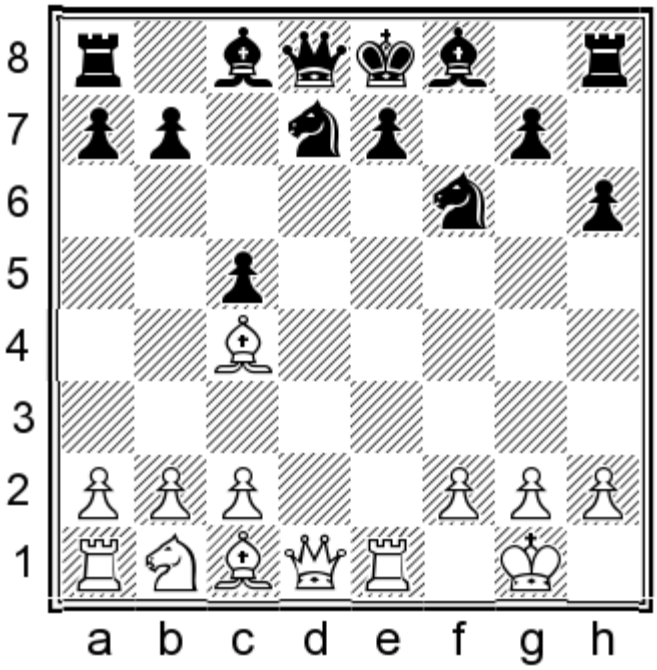


8.♘g5!

The most direct way to make use of the undeveloped Black pieces. White prepares for sacrifices on the e6 and f7 squares!

8...e6

8...h6 leads to similar positions as in the famous Deep Blue-Kasparov game in the Caro-Kann Defence. White intuitively sacrifices a piece with 9.♘xf7! ♔xf7 10.♗c4+ ♔e8



11.♗f4 Followed by simple development with ♘c3! Black is unable to solve the future problems around his king, nor can he try a simplification with 11...♘b6 because of the small tactical trick 12.♗f7+! ♔xf7 13.♕xd8+-

9.♘c3

GM Jones played the even more direct 9.♗c4!? ♗e7 10.♗xe6! 0-0

(*10...fxe6 11.♘xe6* ♕*b6 12.*♕*e2+*- Black can hardly stop this attack.)

11.♕e2± with a big advantage, since the bishop cannot be taken because of ♕xe6 and ♕xe7.

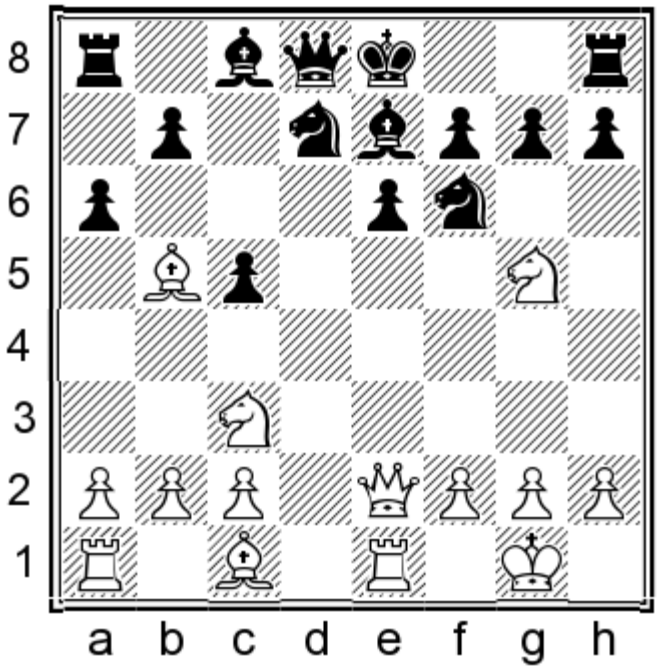
9...♗e7

White needs to act quickly now, as Black is ready to castle kingside after which his extra pawn would tell.

10.♕e2!

White does not want to hide his intentions, he is further pressing the f7 and e6 pawns in order to sacrifice the knight effectively.

10...a6



10...0-0 is met by 11.♘xe6! fxe6 12.♕xe6+ ♖f7

(*12...*♔*h8 13.*♕*xe7+*- with an extra pawn and a winning advantage!)

13.♗c4 ♕f8 14.♕xe7!+- White wins by using the pin!

11.♘xf7!

There is no way to improve the circumstances; all the pieces are prepared for the attack!

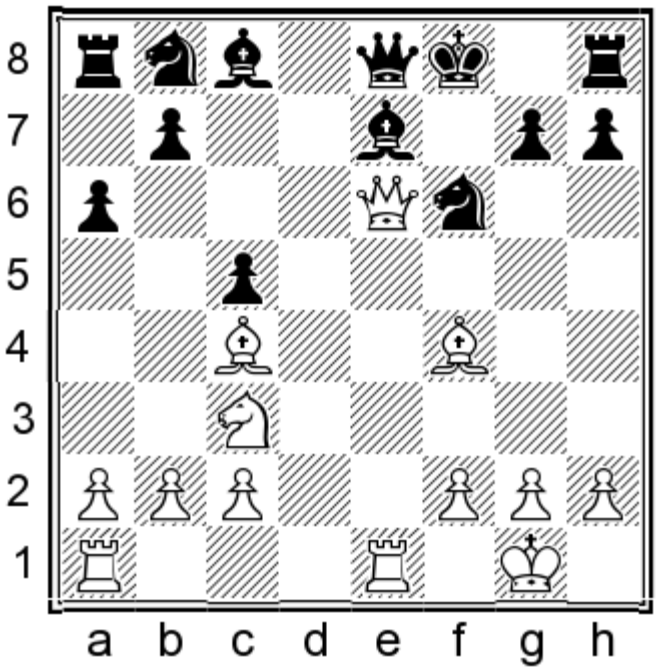
11...♔xf7 12.♕xe6+ ♔f8 13.♗c4

Joining the attack with tempo. Black has only one move to prevent ♕f7.

13...♕e8 14.♗f4!

The most natural developing move. White wants to finish the game with ♗d6.

14...♘b8

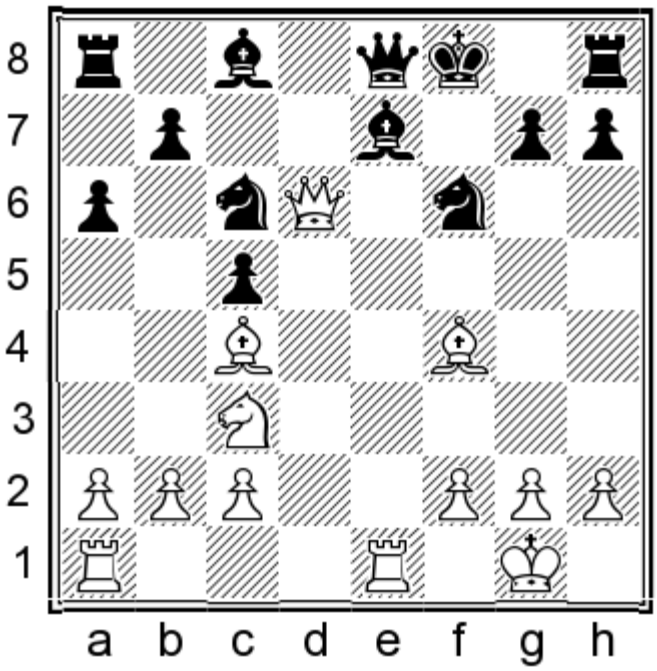


14...b5 15.♗d6!+- is over.

15.♕d6!!

I like this move a lot! White wants to eliminate the defender on e7! Unfortunately 15.♕xf6+? does not work as after 15...♗xf6 (*15...gxf6 16.♗h6#* would have been a nice mate.) 16.♗d6+ ♗e7 Black holds.

15...♘c6



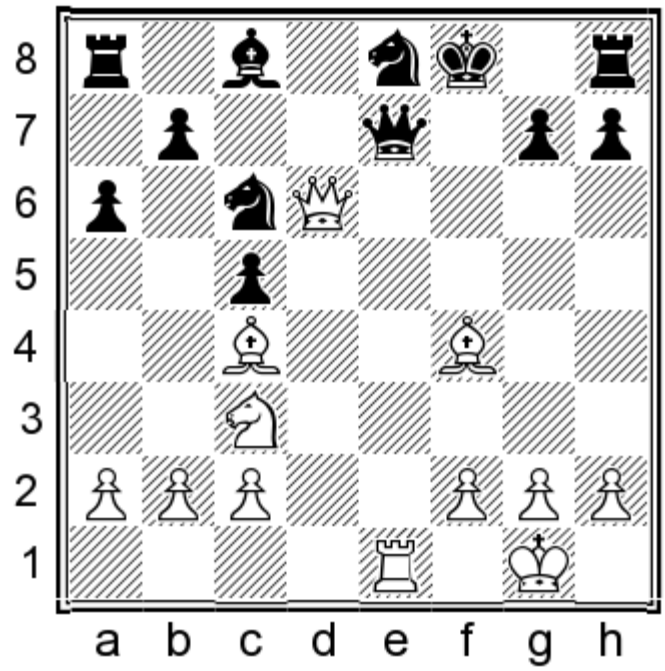
15...b5 is nicely refuted by 16.♖xe7! ♕xe7 17.♖e1 ♕xd6 18.♗xd6#

16.♖xe7!!

A great and consequent attack!

16...♕xe7 17.♖e1 ♘e8

Resourceful defence, but it does not help.



17...♕xd6 18.♗xd6+ ♘e7 19.♖xe7+- and White is mating even without the queen. 17...♗e6 also leads to nice variations: 18.♖xe6 ♕xd6 19.♗xd6+ ♔f7 White starts the hunt of the king with 20.♖e3+! ♔g6 21.♖g3+ ♔f5 The only move. Somehow there is no direct mate. White must be satisfied with obtaining a winning position for instance by playing (*21...♔h6* leads to mate after *22.♗f4+ ♔h5 23.♗f7+ g6 24.f3!*+- followed by ♖h3 mate.)

22.f4 Threatening ♖g5 mate and after 22...h6 23.♖xg7+- the black king is in a mate net that he can hardly escape.

18.♕d1!!

From here, White can quickly switch his queen to the attack via f3 or h5. 18.♕d2 ♕d7 is not so clear.

18...♕f6

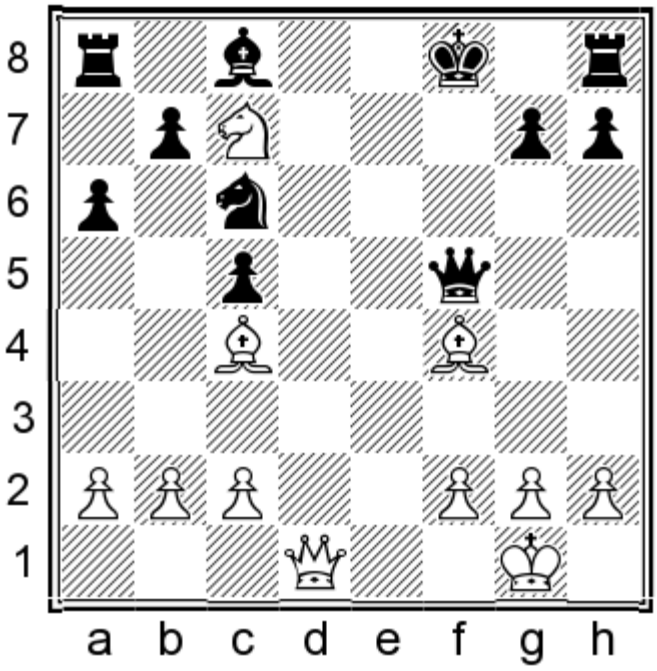
18...♕d7 loses to 19.♕h5 with the simple threat of playing ♕xc5 mate and after 19...b6 20.♖xe8+! ♕xe8 21.♗d6+ ♘e7 22.♕f3+ ♗f5 23.♕xf5+ mates.

19.♘d5!

Dark clouds are approaching the black king. White brings a new attacker.

19...♕g6

White can choose between several different wins here. After 19...♕f5 the easiest win is 20.♖xe8+! ♔xe8 21.♘c7+ ♔f8



and here White has the following pretty finish: 22.♕d8+! ♘xd8 23.♗d6# Not bad! :)

20.♘c7

This is one of them. White wants to deflect the e8 knight from the d6 square. According to the machine, the most precise was 20.♗e3 which is quite an inhuman move. 20...♘d4 21.♗xd4 cxd4 22.♕f3+! ♗f5

(*22...♕f5 23.♕a3+!+-* is the point!)

23.♕a3+ ♘d6

(*23...♕d6 24.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 25.♕xd6++-*)

24.♘e7+- and ♘xf5 next finishes the game.

20...♗g4

20...♘xc7 21.♗d6++-;

20...♗h3 was the best chance, although it loses quite easily too. White has different ways to win... 21.♕f3

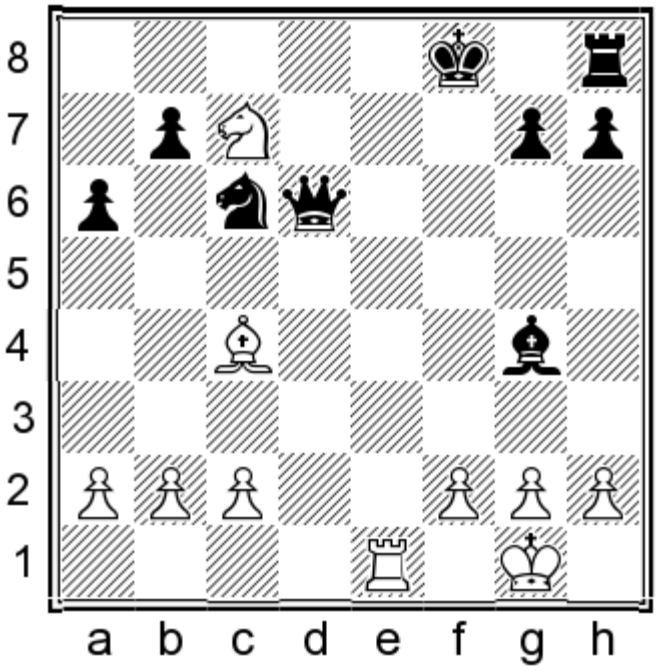
(The simple *21.♗g3* is also good.; The most direct solution is *21.♘e6+ ♗xe6 22.♗d6+ ♘xd6 23.♕xd6+ ♘e7 24.♖xe6 ♕f7 25.♖e4! ♕f6 26.♖f4+-*)

21...♕xg2+ 22.♕xg2 ♗xg2 23.♘xa8 ♗h3 24.♘c7+-

21.♕d5!

♕xc5 is a new threat and the end is near. Black decides to let White finish the game in style:

21...♖d8 22.♕xc5+ ♘d6 23.♗xd6+ ♖xd6 24.♕xd6+! ♕xd6



25.♖e8#

What a game! Especially nice from a ‘pure positional’ player like Alekseev!

1–0

GAME 21
H. Nakamura (2772)
B. Gelfand (2764)
Elancourt FRA Elancourt FRA (10.3)
03.10.2013, [B90]
Annotated by Balogh Csaba

In the penultimate round, Nakamura had the sole lead with +3 and Gelfand shared second place with Caruana, half a point behind him. We could expect an interesting fight for first place.

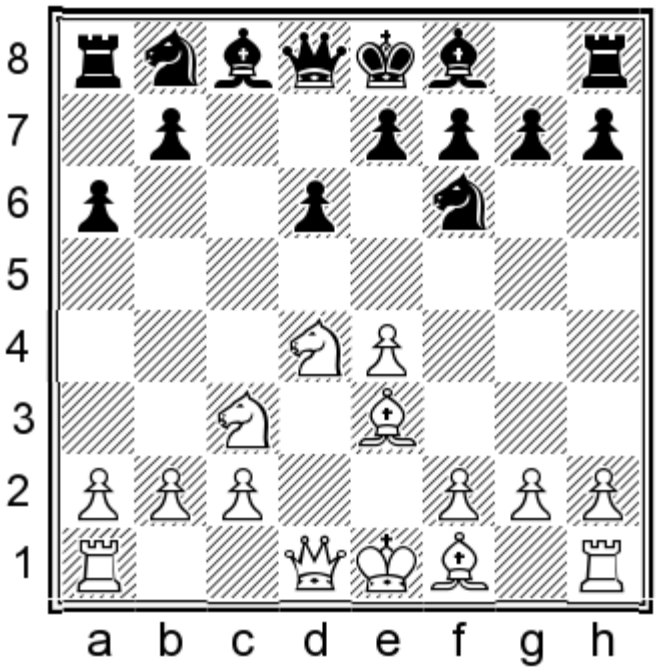
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6

The first surprise. Gelfand chooses his old weapon, the Sicilian Najdorf. Since his World Championship match against Anand, he almost always plays the Sveshnikov variation, which starts with 2...♘c6.

3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6

We are at the initial position of the Najdorf and Nakamura goes for one of the most popular setups.

6.♗e3 ♘g4 7.♗c1 ♘f6 8.♗e3



8...♘g4

An interesting situation. Nakamura could have forced a draw with ♗c1, which would have been a perfect result for him to win the tournament. However, to make a draw like this is so shameful that a player with a lot of ambition plays on without any hesitation.

9.♗g5 h6 10.♗h4 g5 11.♗g3 ♗g7 12.h3

A few weeks ago, Nakamura himself retreated with his knight to f6 against Kamsky. That was another extremely exciting game, which we have also analyzed here in CEWN. Gelfand plays the most common move:

12...♘e5 13.f3 ♘bc6 14.♗f2 ♗e6

A typical move in this variation. Black wants to occupy the c4 square later on.

15.♕d2

Black is not afraid of 15.♘xe6 fxe6 The doubled e-pawns are useful here to control all the important central squares and his minor pieces are excellently placed on the dark squares, especially the one on e5. White should only take this option into consideration if he could quickly organize an attack against the e6 pawn, but here it is not possible, since ♗c4 is controlled by the knight.

15...♖c8

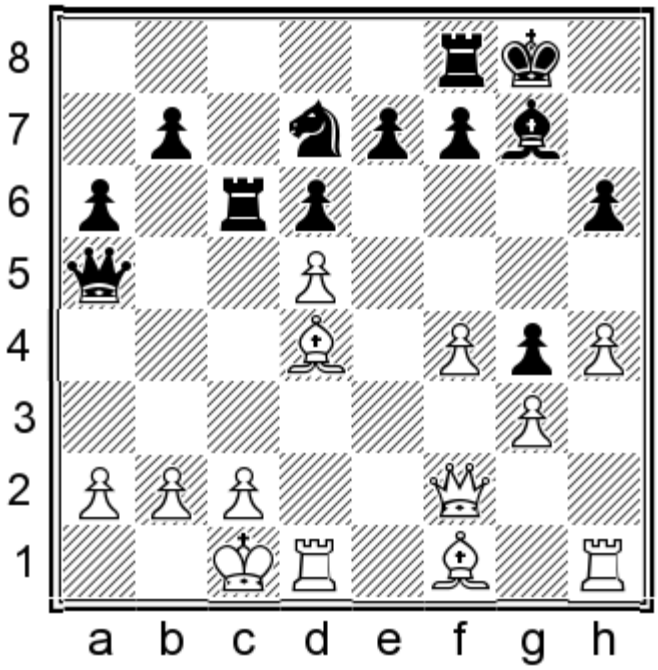
Following the main line, both sides make their most useful developing moves.

16.0-0-0

At first sight it looks dangerous, but this is the only way for White to fight for the advantage. His plans are connected with ♘d5 and opening the position on the kingside with h4!

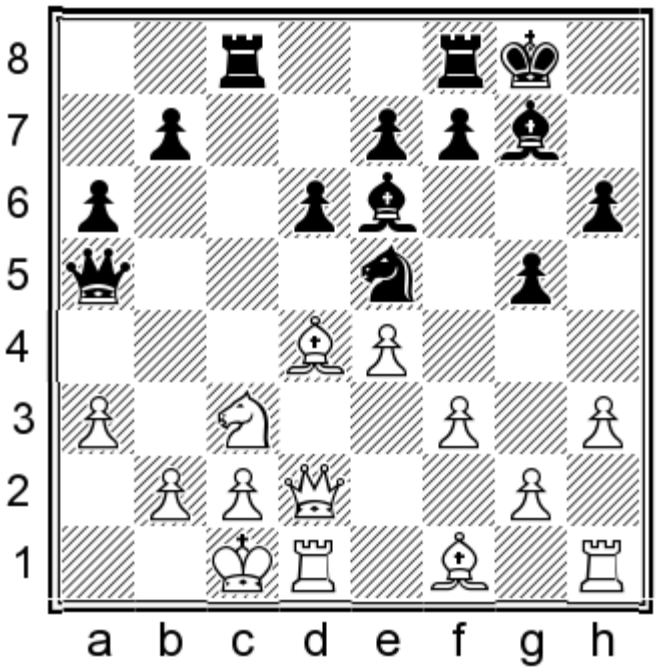
16...♘xd4 17.♗xd4 ♕a5 18.a3!

This is Nakamura's improvement over Gelfand's previous game. White defends the a2 pawn, which was not advisable with 18.♔b1 because of the exchange sacrifice on c3. We can see that Gelfand uses the same ideas in both games. Karjakin had played 18.♕f2 ♖c6! Gelfand defends in the same way against the threatened ♗b6. 19.g3 0-0 20.f4 ♘d7 The same retreat with the knight. 21.h4 g4 Black closes the kingside again in the same style as in the game. 22.♘d5 ♗xd5 23.exd5



23...♖c5! A great exchange sacrifice, which could not be accepted, because then White could not oppose anything to the beast on g7. 24.♗xg7 (*24.♗xc5 ♘xc5*∓) 24...♔xg7 25.♔b1 ♖xd5∓ Black won a pawn and soon the game as well. Karjakin-Gelfand, Wijk aan Zee 2012.

18...0-0



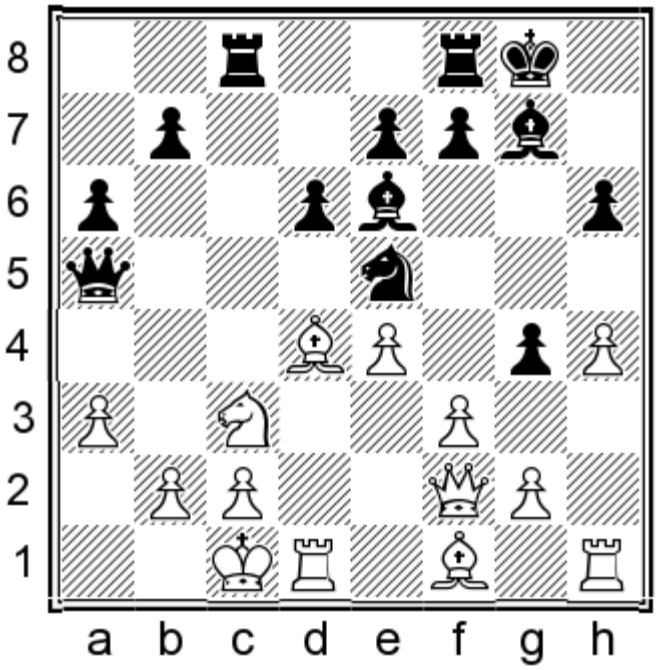
19.h4!

White must try to organize an attack on the kingside, as it is prinicpled in case of opposite side castling.

19...g4!

This is the official novelty, Gelfand played it without thinking, clearly showing that he is still in his preparation.

20.♕f2



20.♕e3!? comes into consideration with the same ♗b6 idea and here Black should probably react with 20...♘c4

(*20...♖c6* is less effective because of *21.f4 ♖fc8 22.♔b1* Black can never take on c3.)

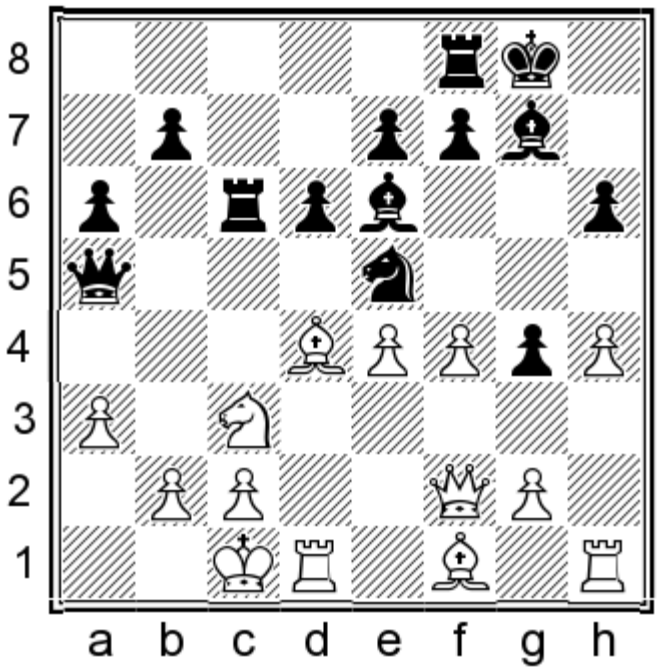
21.♗xc4 ♖xc4 22.♗xg7 ♔xg7 In my opinion, this is the critical position from the opening point of view. 23.fxg4 ♖fc8 It seems like Black has strong counterplay on the queenside.

20...♖c6!

Black not only prevents ♗b6, but prepares to double his rooks on the c-file, which could be very dangerous with the idea of dismantling White's king position with an exchange sacrifice on c3!

21.f4!

White must act, otherwise he gets crushed.

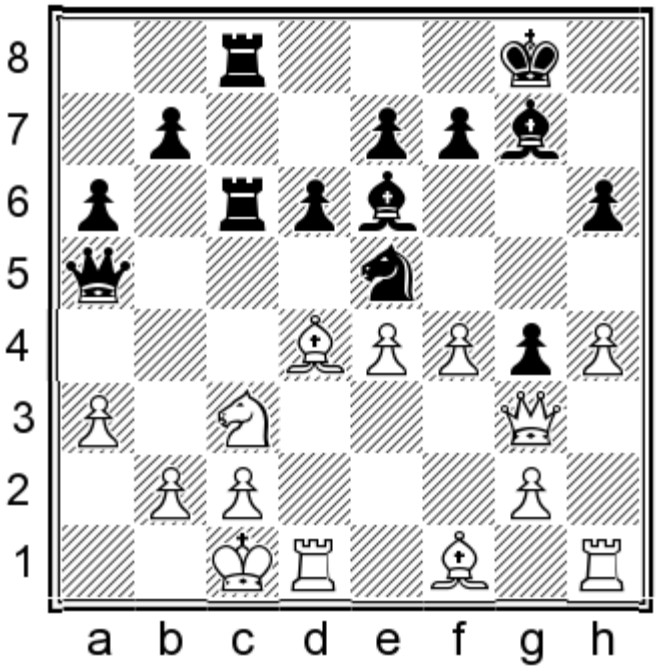


21...♖fc8!

This sacrifice was the main idea of Gelfand's preparation. Impressive analysis!

22.♕g3?

Nakamura usually feels comfortable in such complicated positions, but this time he loses the thread.



22.f5! was the best move for White, which actually leads to a forced draw in all the lines. The move is pretty illogical for the human mind, since it leaves an excellent outpost for the knight on e5! However chess is a concrete game!
22...♗c4!

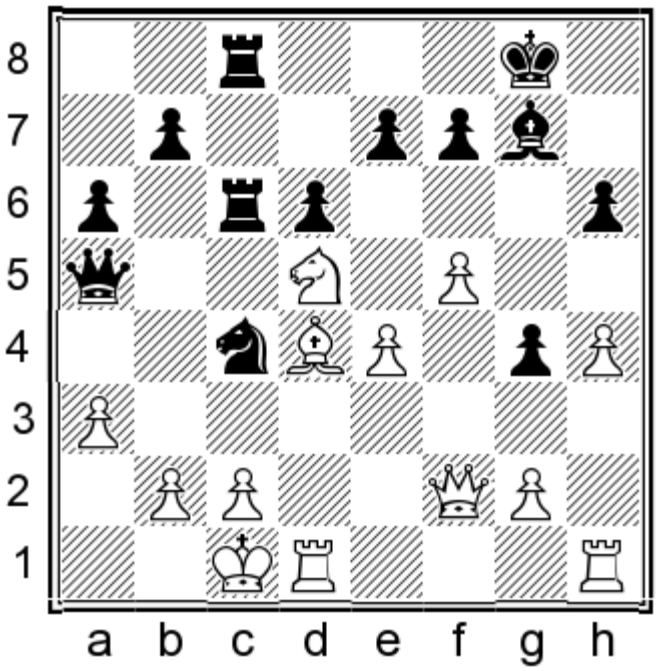
(The passive *22...♗d7* could be met by *23.♕e3!* preventing the sacrifice on c3. White wants to play ♔b1 and it is not easy for Black to proceed with the attack. For instance *23...b5* is met by *24.♔b1 b4? 25.axb4 ♕xb4 26.♘d5+-* and the e7 pawn is hanging.)

23.♗xc4 ♘xc4

(*23...♖xc4?* is a blunder *24.♗b6!* Trapping the queen!)

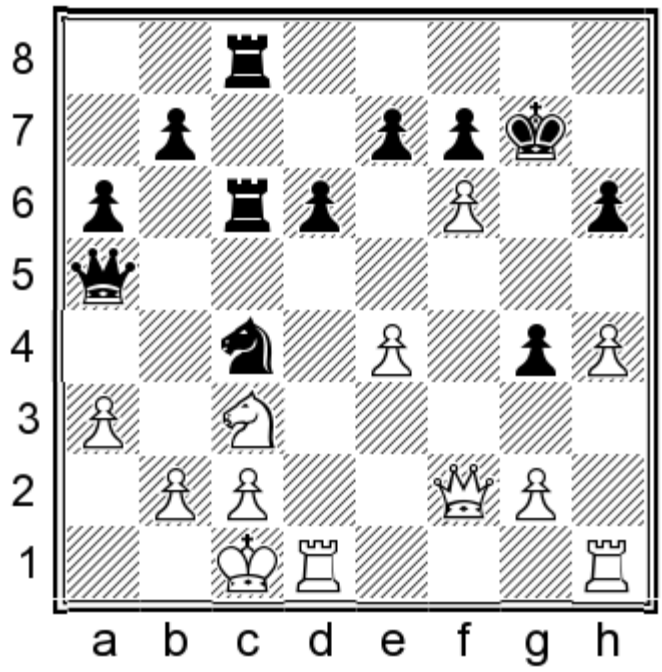
24.♗xg7

(On *24.♘d5* Black must find



24...♘xb2!! 25.♘xe7+ ♔h7 26.♘xc6 ♕xa3 27.♔d2 ♖xc6 Black is more than fine!)

24...♔xg7 25.f6+!



Things are getting really tense now! Both sides are more or less ready for the mating attack, a typical Sicilian game!
25...♔g8! The only move!

(*25...exf6* loses to *26.♘d5* White arrives first! *26...♘xa3 27.♕xf6+ ♔h7 28.♕xf7+ ♔h8 29.♕f6+ ♔h7 30.c3+*-)

26.♘d5 leads to a draw after

(*26.fxe7 ♘xb2!* The only move, but a good one! *27.♖hf1 f5!* Another only move and suddenly Black has succeeded in winning some time in order to be ahead in the attack.)

26...♘xa3! 27.♘xe7+ ♔f8 28.♘xc6 ♖xc6 29.bxa3 ♕xa3+ 30.♔b1

(*30.♔d2?* is refuted by the following little combination: *30...♖xc2+! 31.♔xc2 ♕a2+ 32.♔c3 ♕xf2*–+)

30...♕b4±;

22.fxe5? loses to 22...dxe5 23.♗e3 ♖xc3! 24.bxc3 ♕xa3+ 25.♔d2 ♕xc3+ 26.♔c1 and here Black has more than a perpetual by deflecting the queen from the c2 square.

(*26.♔e2 ♗c4+ 27.♖d3 ♕xc2+*–+ wins.)

26...g3! 27.♕e2 ♗g4! Another deflection! 28.♕d3 ♕a1+ 29.♔d2 ♕xd1#

22...♘d7!

Just like in the game against Karjakin, Gelfand retreats his knight to d7 with the idea to trade the dark squared bishops and with this makes the sacrifice on c3 more effective!

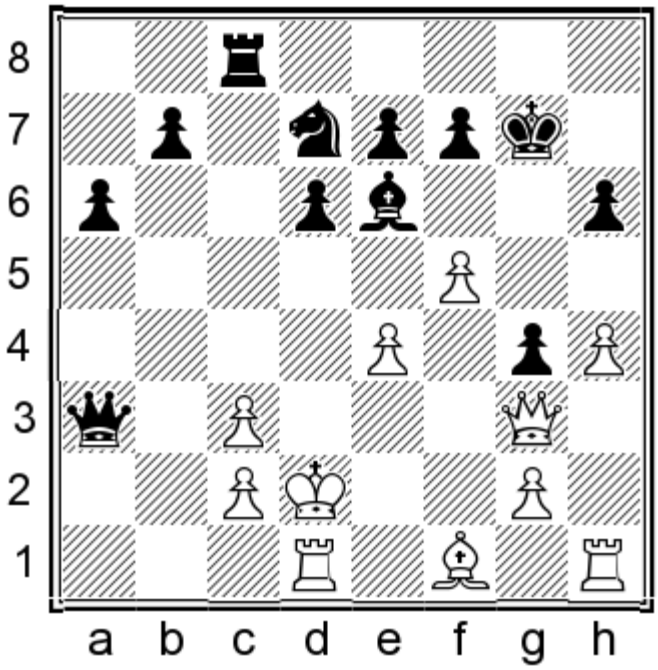
23.♗xg7 ♔xg7 24.f5

There is no way back, White must go forward and hope that the sacrifice will not lead to mate. On 24.♖d3 Black can strengthen the pressure on the c3 square by playing 24...♘c5! 25.♖e3 ♘a4!–+

24...♖xc3

Gelfand plays the most tempting human move! The computer points out that 24...♘e5! was even stronger. 25.fxe6 ♖xc3! 26.bxc3 ♖xc3 27.♖d3 ♘xd3+ 28.♗xd3 The win still requires precise play: 28...♖xa3! Threatening mate in two after ♖a1 and ♕a3. 29.♕xg4+ ♔f8 30.♔d1 The only move to avoid mate, but here the rook falls: 30...♖a1+ 31.♔e2 ♖xh1 This is still not the end of the variation... 32.exf7 ♕e1+ 33.♔f3 Black now has to find 33...♕d1+! 34.♗e2 ♖f1+! 35.♔e3 (*35.♔g3 ♕e1+ 36.♔h2 ♖h1#*) 35...♕c1+ 36.♔d3 ♖xf7 37.♕c8+ ♔g7 38.♕g4+ ♔h7–+ and now it is finally over!

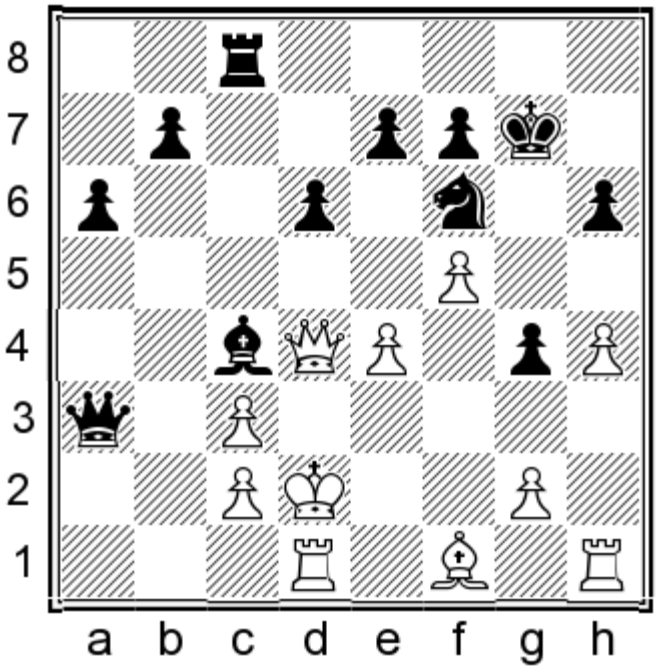
25.bxc3 ♕xa3+ 26.♔d2



26...♘f6!

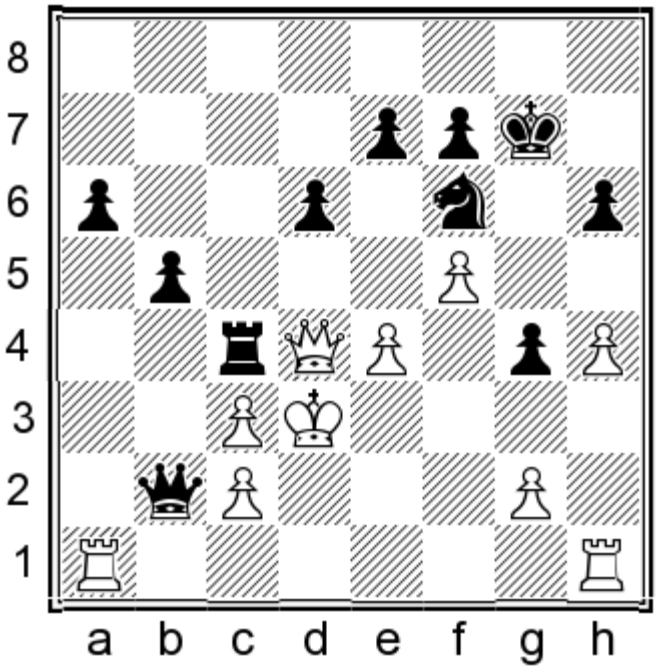
A very unpleasant intermediate move, which seriously increases Black’s chances for a successful attack.

27.♕d3 ♗c4 28.♕d4



28...d5!

Following the principles. Gelfand opens the central files in front of the white king. Gelfand showed a fantastic line at the press conference. He said that his original idea was to play 28...b5 with the threat of ♗xf1 followed by ♖c4, winning the e4 pawn, but White has 29.♗d3 and after 29...♗xd3 30.♖a1! ♕b2 31.♔xd3 ♖c4



32.♖hb1! ♖xd4+ 33.cxd4! the queen is suddenly trapped and White wins!

29.exd5

29.♖e1 ♗xf1 30.e5 is refuted by 30...♖c4! 31.exf6+ exf6 32.♕e3 The strongest is 32...d4! (*32...♗xg2* also wins) 33.cxd4 ♕a5+ 34.♔d1 ♕a1+ 35.♔d2 ♖xd4+–+

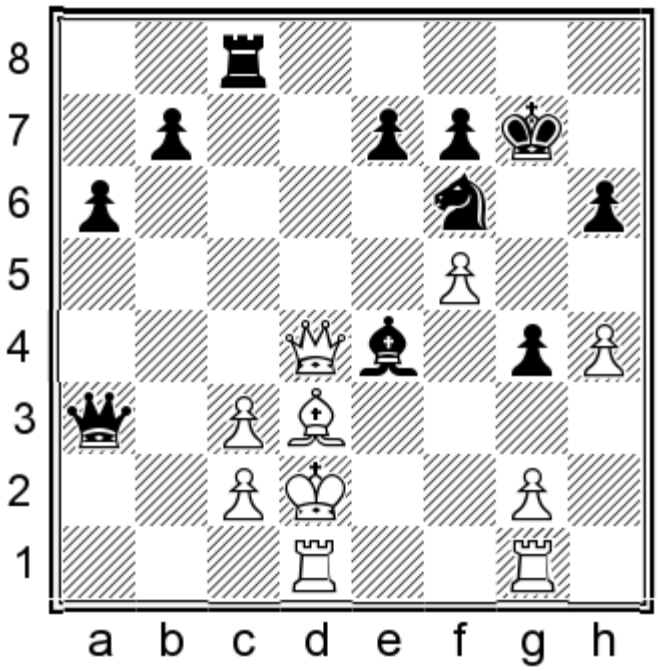
29...♗xd5 30.♖g1!

Calm defence by Nakamura. White wants to put his bishop to d3 to close the d-file. 30.♗d3 ♗xg2 31.♖hg1 ♗f3–+ Black is better, even materially.

30...♗e4!

30...♖d8 31.♗d3 is unclear. Black must waste an important tempo on defending the d8 rook in order to make the discovery attack with the d5 bishop possible, but then White is already in time to consolidate. For instance after 31...♖d7 32.♕b4! solves the problems!

31.♗d3



31...♕a5!

Another great move with multiple ideas. The main one is the ♖d8 threat, but Black also wants to grab the f5 pawn, collecting further pawns for the exchange. 31...♗xd3 was the alternative. 32.cxd3 ♕b2+ 33.♔e3 ♖xc3 34.♖c1 ♕xc1+ 35.♖xc1 ♖xc1 White should be able to hold this endgame.

32.♕b4 ♕c7!

32...♕xf5 33.♖gf1 was unclear.

33.♗xe4?

The decisive mistake. After very resourceful defence, Nakamura was already very close to survival. He should have tried to hide his king with 33.♔c1 It is not obvious how Black should continue his attack. Probably the best is to play 33...a5 34.♕d4 ♖d8 35.♕c4 White just manages to cover the c3 pawn, but 35...♕xc4 36.♗xc4 ♖xd1+ 37.♔xd1 (*37.♖xd1? ♗xg2*∓) 37...♗xf5 White must suffer for a draw, but with perfect play it should be possible to achieve it.

33...a5!

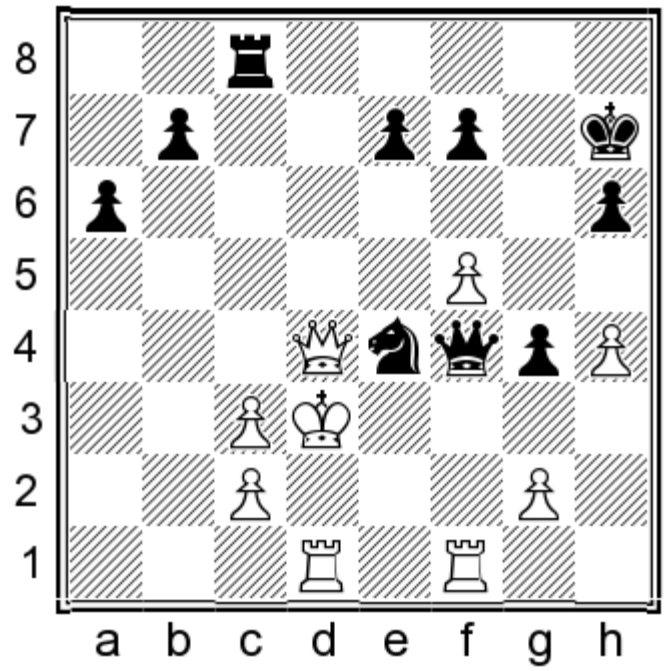
Excellent calculation by Gelfand! 33...♕f4+ was also winning, but it was much more difficult to find. 34.♔d3 ♘xe4!

(*34...♖d8+* spoils the win as after *35.♔c4* the king finds shelter on b3.)

35.♕d4+

(*35.♕xe4 ♖xc3+–+*)

35...♔h7 36.♖gf1



(*36.♖df1 ♕d2+ 37.♔xe4 ♕e2+ 38.♔f4 ♖c4–+*)

36...♖xc3+! 37.♕xc3 ♕g3+ 38.♖f3

(*38.♔xe4 ♕xc3–+*)

38...♘f2+! 39.♔c4 gxf3–+ Black wins because the d1 rook is also hanging.

34.♕xb7

34.♕d4 ♖d8–+

34...♕f4+! 35.♔e2

35.♔d3 is refuted by 35...♖d8+ 36.♔c4 ♘xe4! 37.♖xd8 ♘d6+ 38.♔b3 ♘xb7–+

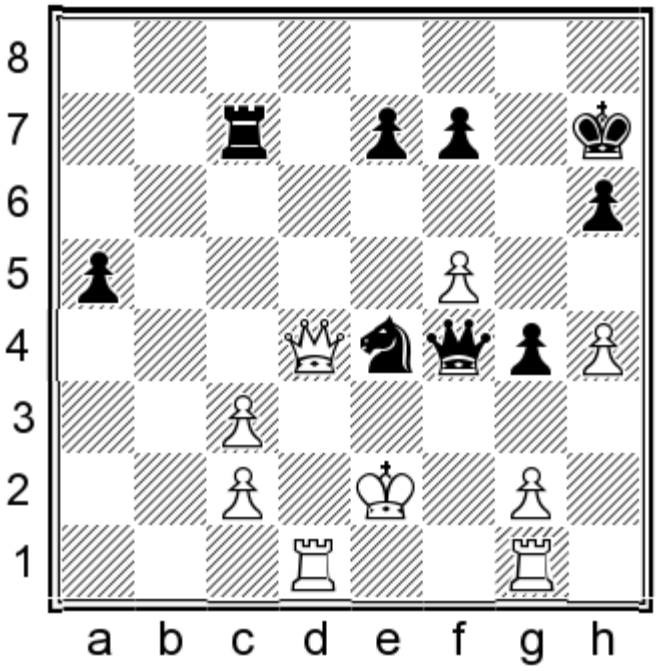
35...♖c7!

The last difficult intermediate move to find. Black takes on e4 next and the attack finally breaks through! 35...♘xe4 36.♕xc8 and Black only has perpetual check here: 36...♘g3+ 37.♔d3 ♕e4+ 38.♔d2 ♕f4

36.♕b6

36.g3 ♕e5–+ does not change anything.

36...♘xe4 37.♕d4+ ♔h7



White has no defence!

38.c4

38.♖gf1 loses to 38...♘xc3+! 39.♕xc3 ♕xf1+! 40.♔xf1 ♖xc3–+

38...♖d7!

The final blow!

39.♕e3

39.♕xd7 ♕f2+ 40.♔d3 ♘c5+ 41.♔c3 ♘xd7–+

39...♘g3+ 40.♕xg3 ♕xg3 41.♖xd7 ♕e5+

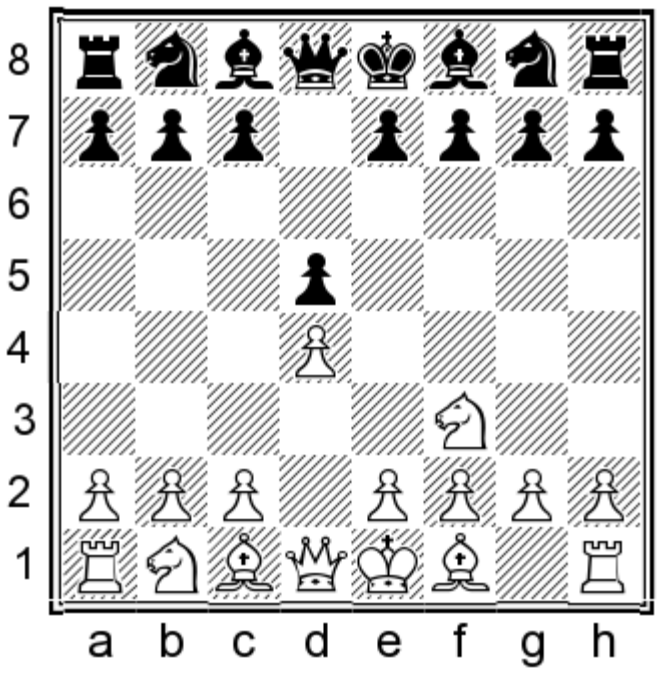
A fantastic game with which Gelfand overtook the lead and won the tournament! Gelfand is rather known for his outstanding understanding of the game, but as we see, his tactical skills are also amazing!

0–1

GAME 22
A. Giri (2749)
M. Bartel (2638)
29th ECC Open 2013 Rhodes GRE (6.1)
25.10.2013, [D02]
Annotated by Balogh Csaba

The talented Polish GM Bartel Mateusz likes choosing unusual openings and taking risky decisions, therefore sometimes he is very successful, but on bad days he gets badly punished for them.

1.♘f3 d5 2.d4



2...a6

The first unusual move in the opening. It has its point, namely to fight against White's most natural move c4, as Black is ready to take it and protect it with b5 now and he does not need to worry about the typical a4 undermining anymore.

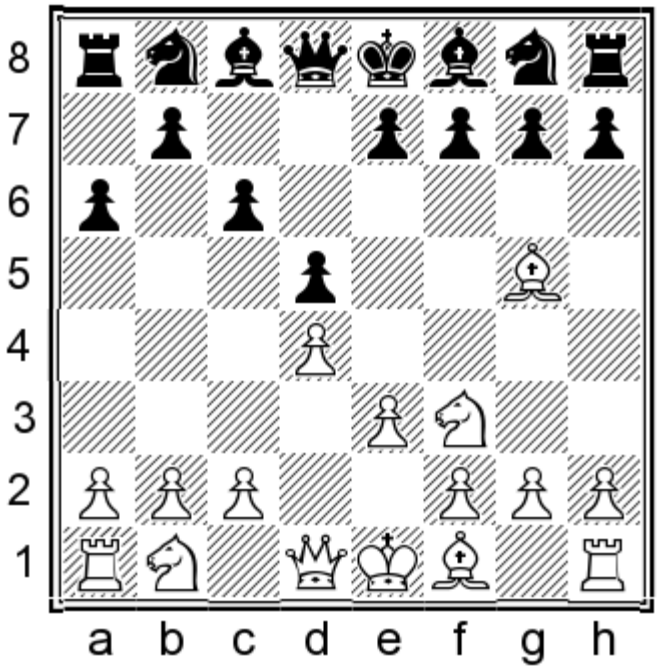
3.♗g5!

I like this move a lot. It disturbs Black's development a bit and White wants to play e3 followed by c4, when the dark-squared bishop does not get stuck behind the e3 pawn.

3...c6

The start of the next dubious plan. Black should have continued the development with ♘f6 and e6, although in this case the a6 move is not the most useful.

4.e3



4...♕b6?

The drawback of the early development of the c1 bishop is usually the b2 pawn. Black tries to make use of it, but in this case it is rather a poisoned pawn, as Black simply loses too many tempi to grab it.

5.♗d3!

White obviously does not pay any attention to that pawn.

5...♕xb2 6.♘bd2

White has developed 4 of his pieces, while Black is only moving with his queen and he needs to waste a further tempo in order to avoid it being trapped.

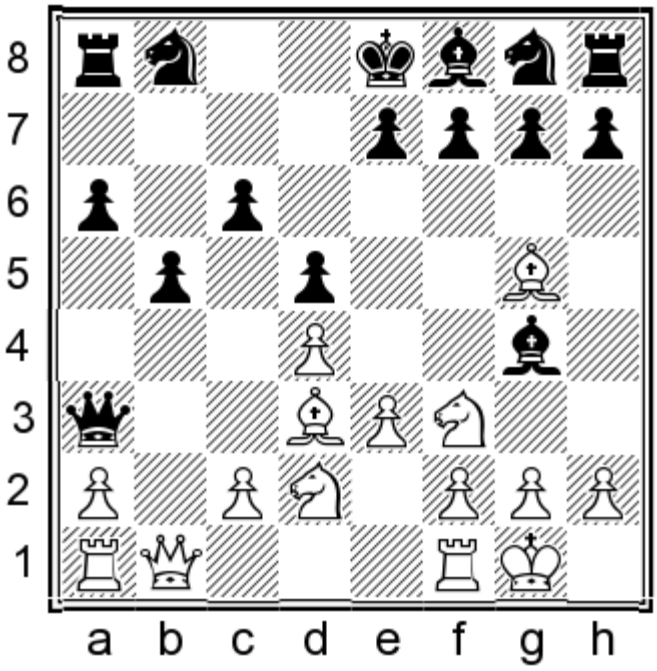
6...♕a3 7.0-0 ♗g4

The first developing move in the game by Black.

8.♕b1!

A great move! In order to make use of his huge advantage in development, White needs to open up the position. He intends to do it by playing c4, but first he protects his d3 bishop and at the same time attacks b7.

8...b5



Black tries to keep the position closed, but after the following spectacular move he just fails:

9.c4!!

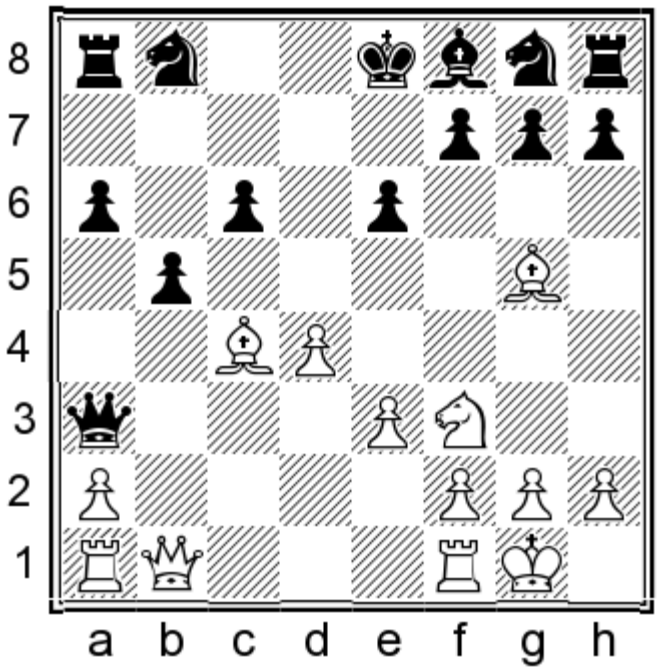
White is able to open the position, using the fact that bxc4 is met by ♕b7, trapping the rook.

9...♗xf3

9...dxc4 loses to 10.♘xc4! bxc4 11.♕b7+-

10.♘xf3 dxc4 11.♗xc4! e6

Black is ready to develop his kingside pieces in order to tuck his king away safely. White needs to act quickly to punish his opponent.



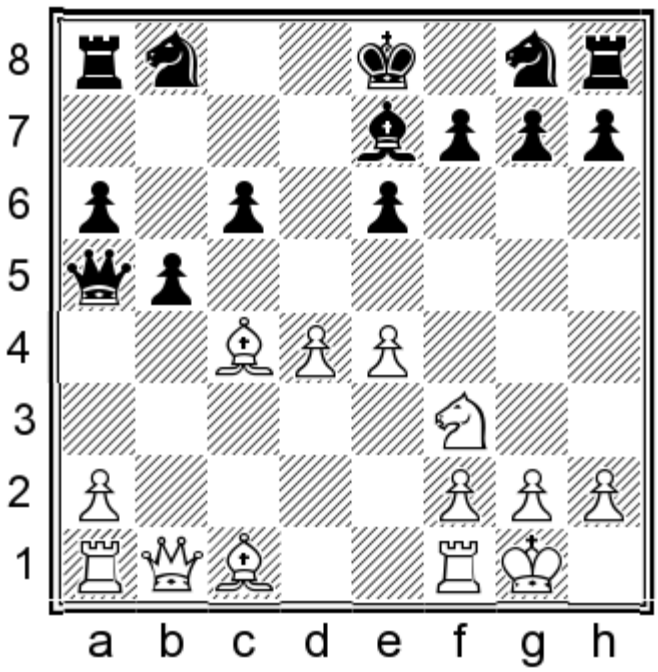
12.e4!

Another excellent decision! White plays principled chess, he wants to push d5 to open the lines for his rooks in front of the opponent's king. The c4 bishop is always taboo because of ♕b7.

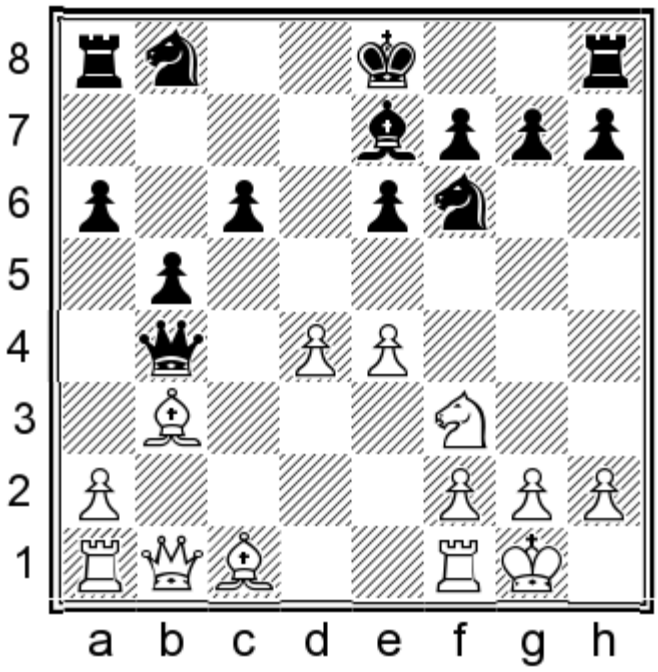
12...♗e7 13.♗c1!

A very nice attack by Giri. He preserves his bishop with tempo in order to make the d5 break even more effective.

13...♕a5



13...♕b4 is met by 14.♗b3 ♘f6



15.a4! The bishop suddenly arrives at a3! This was the main point behind ♗c1.

14.d5!

Consequent play by White!

14...exd5?

This is too much. Black even opens the e-file in front of his king. 14...cxd5 was the only move. 15.♗b3
(The point is that *15.exd5?* is already met by *15...bxc4!* because *16.♕b7 ♕xd5!* saves the rook.)
15...♘f6 16.exd5 exd5 17.♖e1 Black's position is highly suspicious, but he can still fight.

15.exd5 ♘f6

Black is only one tempo away from his dream to castle, but he fails after energetic play by Giri! If 15...bxc4 16.♕b7+-

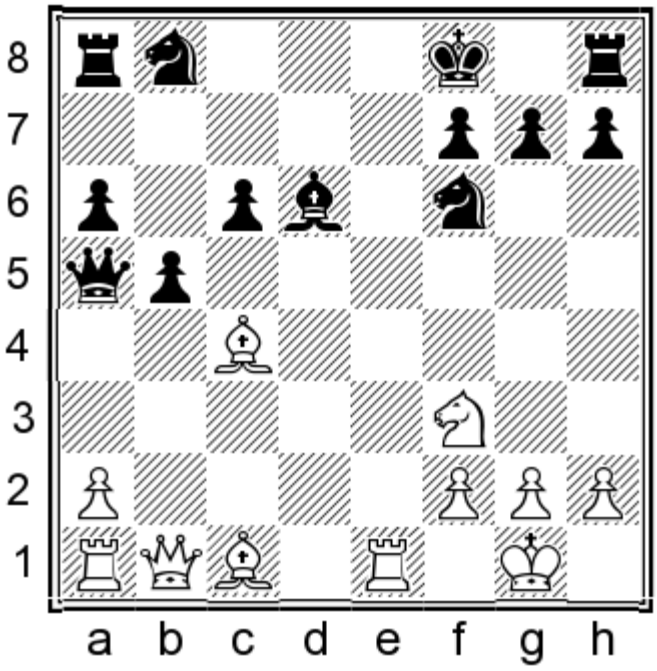
16.d6!

16.♖e1? was bad in view of 16...0-0! 17.♖xe7 bxc4 18.♕b7 ♘bd7 and suddenly Black is winning.

16...♗xd6 17.♖e1+

This is a deadly check, which means that Black must forget about castling in this game.

17...♔f8



18.♕f5!

Giri continues playing the most aggressive moves. ♕c8 threatens with mate and after

18...♘bd7 19.♗xf7! ♘e5

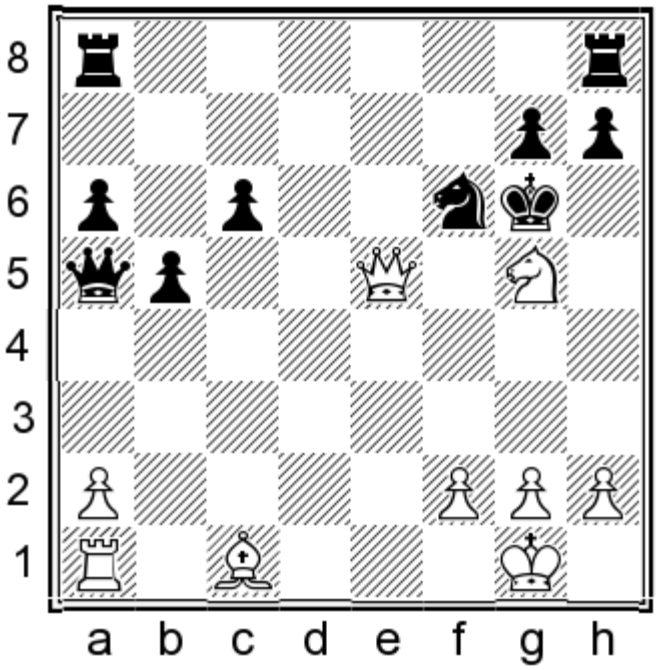
Black tries to play against the White back rank and also attacks the f7 bishop. Unfortunately for him White has a nice win. 19...♔xf7 leads to mate after 20.♕e6+ ♔f8

(*20...♔g6 21.♘h4+ ♔h5 22.♕f5+ ♔xh4 23.♕h3#*)

21.♕xd6+ ♔g8 22.♕e6+ ♔f8 23.♗f4 and ♗d6 or on g6 ♗h6 mates. 19...♕xe1+! was the only move to extend the fight. Black gets rid of some attacking pieces. 20.♘xe1 ♔xf7 21.♘f3 ♖he8 22.♗b2 and White should win later on.

20.♖xe5! ♗xe5 21.♗b3

White preserves his bishop. Black cannot defend. 21.♕xe5 was also strong and the point is that after 21...♔xf7 22.♘g5+ ♔g6

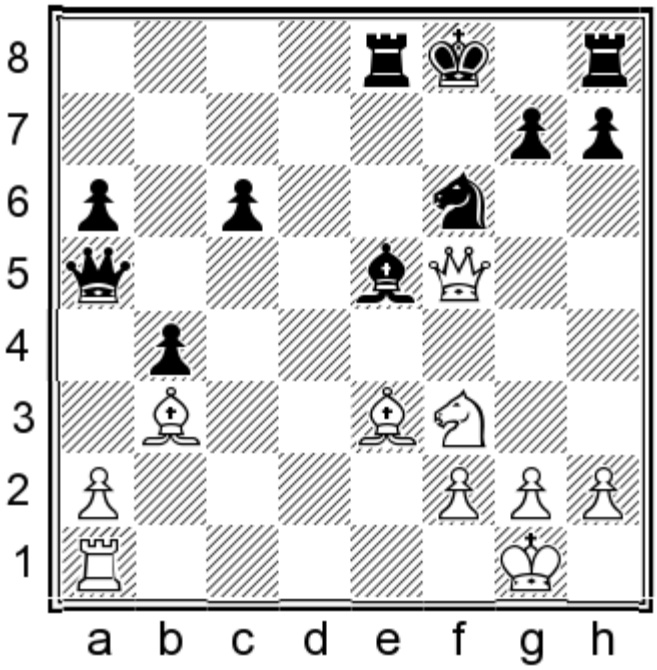


23.g4!!+- ♕f5 is unavoidable.

21...♖e8 22.♗e3

♗c5 is the next threat against which Black has only one move.

22...b4



23.♗f4!

Black resigned in view of 23.♗f4! g6 24.♘xe5!! gxf5 25.♗h6+ ♔e7 26.♘xc6+ ♔d6 27.♘xa5+- White ends up with decisive material advantage and he continues attacking. What a fantastic game by Giri!

1–0

GAME 23
B. Jobava (2705)
M. Oleksienko (2622)
Al-Ain Classic Open A 2013 Al-Ain UAE (6.1)
24.12.2013, [B00]
Annotated by Balogh Csaba

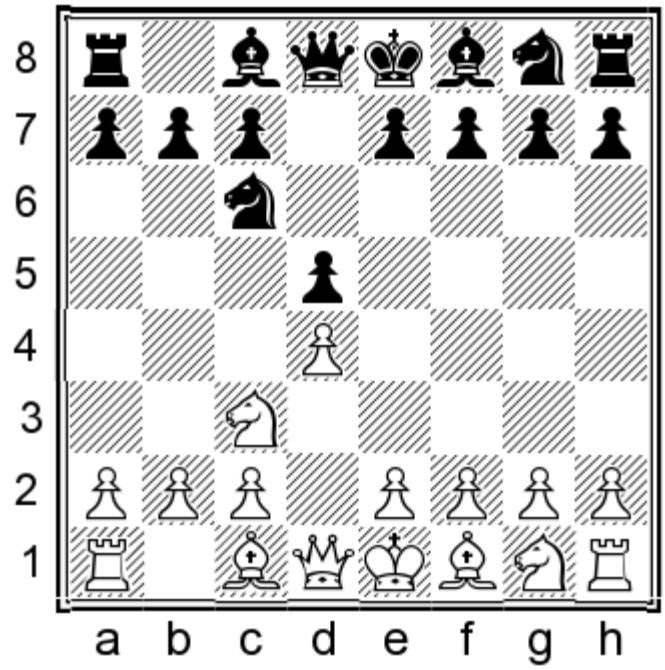
A really great and entertaining game with a beautiful mate at the end.

1.d4 d5 2.♘c3

Baadur Jobava is known for his original and resourceful style. He often chooses tricky openings.

2...♘c6

A rare response against a rare line. Black's usual answer is 2...♘f6.



3.e4!

The most challenging move for sure. White tries to make use of the placement of the c6 knight and the fact that Black cannot hold the tension in the center with c6. Actually there are more than a thousand games for this position in the database, but it mainly arose from the move order 1.e4 ♘c6 2. d4 d5 3.♘c3.

3...dxe4

3...e6 would have transposed to an inferior line in the French Defence.

4.d5 ♘e5 5.♕d4!

White aims for a very quick development connected with castling queenside.

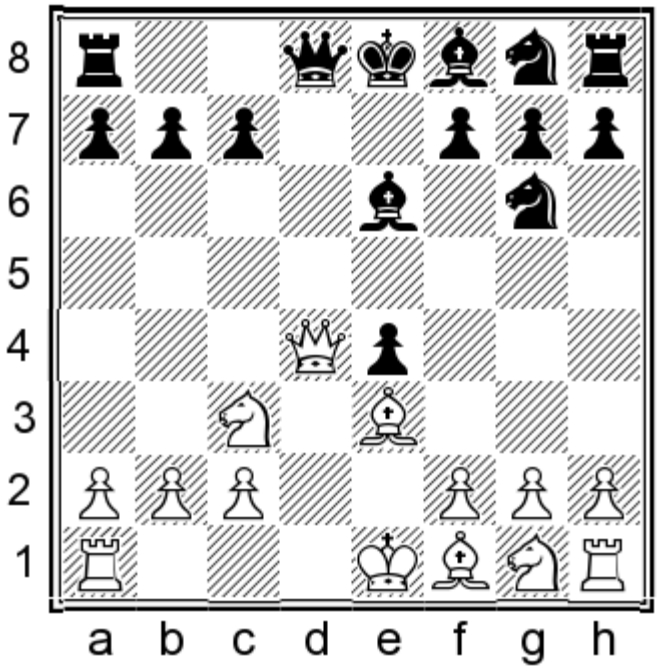
5...♘g6 6.♗e3

Jobava does not want to waste any time on recapturing the pawn and rather finish the development as soon as possible. 6.♕xe4 is the other main line and a good alternative to the text move. Most of the games continue with 6...♘f6 7.♕a4+ ♗d7 8.♗b5 a6 9.♗xd7+ ♕xd7 10.♕xd7+ ♘xd7 11.♘f3 with a slightly better endgame for White.

6...e5!

A strong reaction by Black. After some careless moves he could have found himself stuck with the development of his pieces...

7.dxe6 ♗xe6



8.♘ge2

This is the novelty of the game. I doubt that it was a prepared one but it is a rather logical one. Black needs to trade the queens now or in the next move as White is threatening to play 0-0-0 and ♕a4 and then the knight takes back with tempo as it attacks the e6 bishop. 8.♘xe4 and 8.♕xe4 mainly happened before.

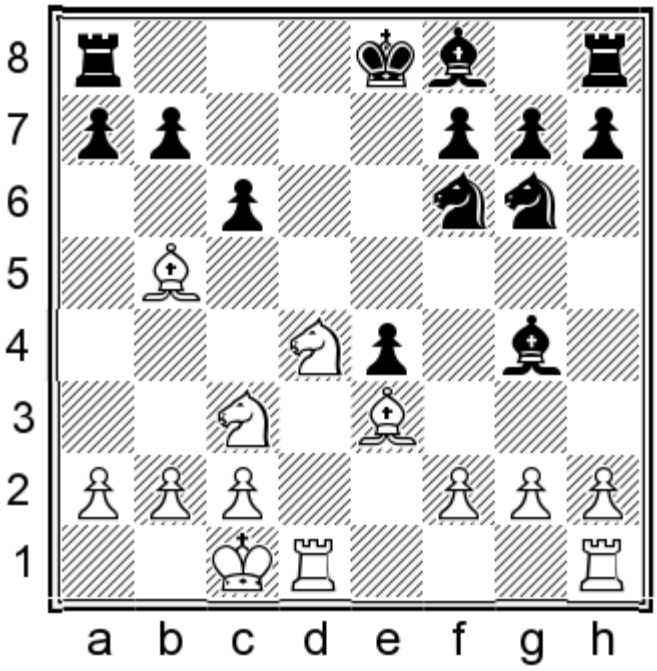
8...♘f6 9.0-0-0 ♕xd4 10.♘xd4 ♗g4

Black saves his bishop with tempo. After the passive 10...♗d7 White takes the initiative with 11.♘db5, winning back the sacrificed pawn.

11.♗b5+

White continues his strategy to punish Black for his king who is stuck in the center.

11...c6



12.♘xc6!

I can very well imagine that Jobava made this move without thinking. Such intuitive sacrifices run in his blood.

12...a6!

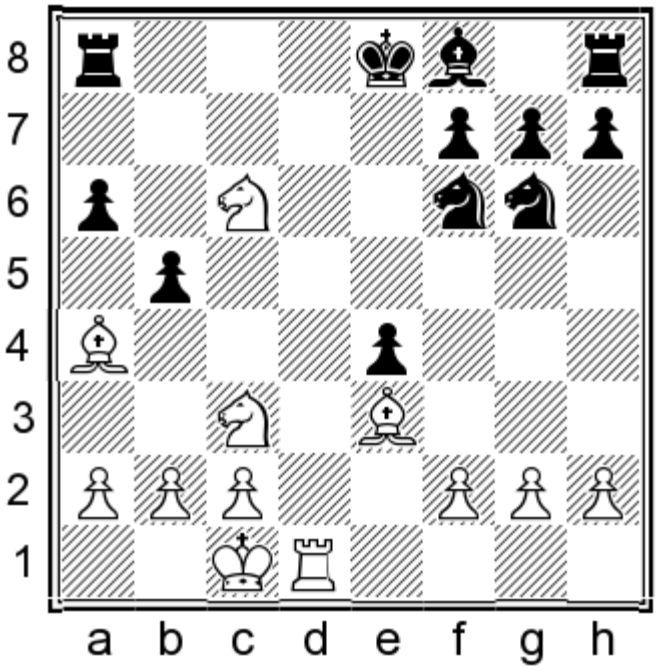
A necessary intermediate move. On the direct 12...♗xd1 White has 13.♘xa7+ ♔e7 14.♖xd1 and Black has problems with his king.

13.♗a4!

White has to maintain the pin but now the discovered checks with the knight could be met by b5. That is why Black had to include the a6 move...

13...♗xd1 14.♖xd1 ♗e7!

Another calm and good reaction. Black tries to ensure the safety of his king. 14...b5



15.♗xb5!! axb5 16.♘xb5 And Black cannot deal with the ♘c7 threat. Even 16...♖c8 runs into 17.♘c7+! ♖xc7 18.♖d8#

15.♘xe7+!

Otherwise Black already plays b5 and castles kingside. On the other hand White is still an exchange down and he trades another attacking piece...

15...♔xe7 16.♗c5+ ♔e6

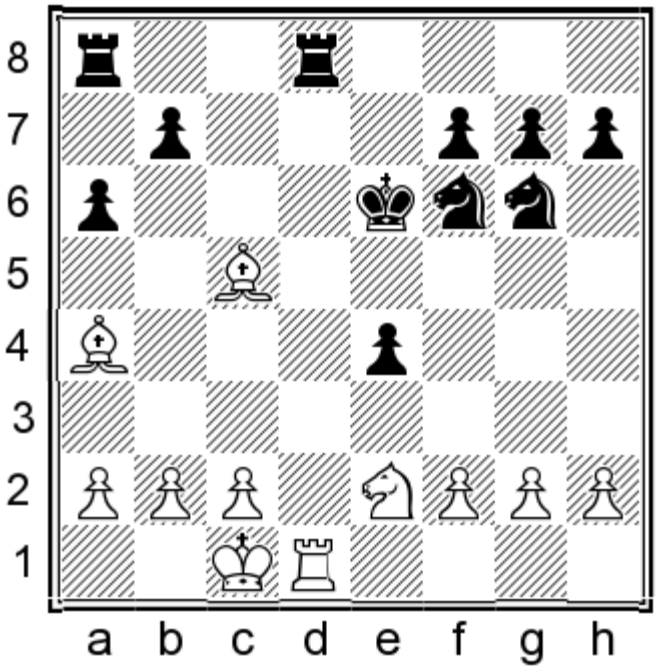
The king is looking for a shelter on the kingside, but in front of his own pawns.

17.♘e2

Bringing in a new attacker. 17.♖d6+ ♔f5 It is not clear how White should continue here.

17...♖hd8

Oleksienko is finding the best defensive resources. He activates his rook and is not afraid of the direct checks.



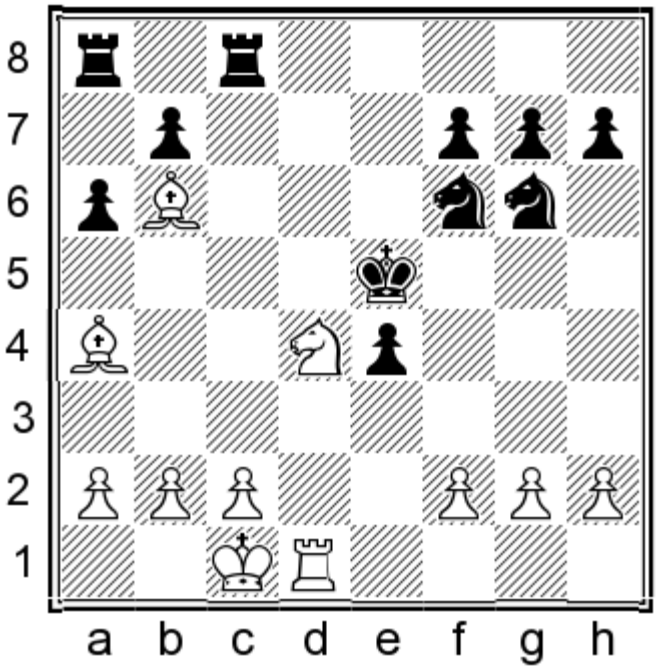
18.♘d4+!

White must avoid the trade of the rooks. With the 3 minor pieces he would hardly be able to create mating nets and soon the material disadvantage would count.

18...♔e5 19.♗b6!

Threatening to take the rook followed by ♘c6, winning another exchange, and also ♗c7 mate! The next move is forced again.

19...♖dc8



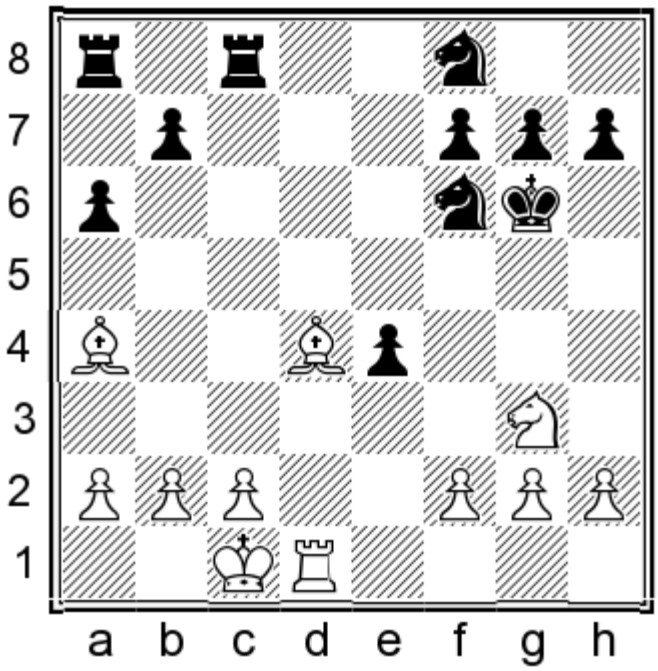
20.♘e2!

Using the fact that the rook has been sent away from the d-file, White refreshes his ideas of when he played 17.♘e2. He wants to pursue the king with ♗d4.

20...♘f8!

According to the computer Black found the best defense again. The idea is to drive the knight to e6 in order to control the checks and Black also frees the g6 square for his king.

21.♗d4+ ♔f5 22.♘g3+ ♔g6



It looks like Black has solved all his problems and settled his king into safety. However such a creative player as Jobava never runs out of ideas...

23.f4! exf3?

Black probably missed the next move, otherwise he would have opened the position in front of his king. 23...h5! should have been played, finally solving the problems around the king. White only has compensation for the exchange... 24.f5+ ♔h6! Objectively Black should be better here.

(*24...♔h7 25.♗xf6 gxf6 26.♘xh5* White wins the f6 pawn as well. He has the upper hand...)

24.c3!!

Suddenly the a4 bishop which was already out of the game join the attack with extreme power. Black cannot hide his king anymore with h5-♔h7, because the light squared bishop controls everything. From a practical point of view the game is hopeless for Black, but of course the machine still continues defending tenaciously...

24...fxg2

24...♘e6! 25.♗c2+ ♔g5 26.♗e3+ ♔h4 27.♘f5+ ♔h5 and somehow White does not have more than a draw. 28.♘g3+ ♔h4

25.♗c2+ ♔g5

25...♔h6 was also losing after 26.♘f5+ ♔g5

(*26...♔h5 27.♘xg7+*)

27.♗e3+ ♔g4 28.♖d4+ ♘e4! The only move, but it does not save Black...

(*28...♔f3 29.♗d1#; 28...♔h3 29.♖h4#*)

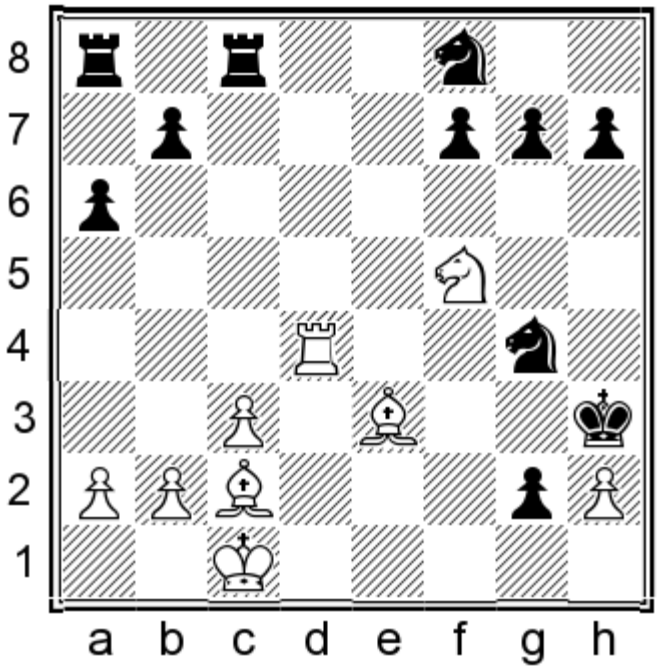
29.♗xe4

26.♗e3+!

The king has no way back, it must cross the half of the board...

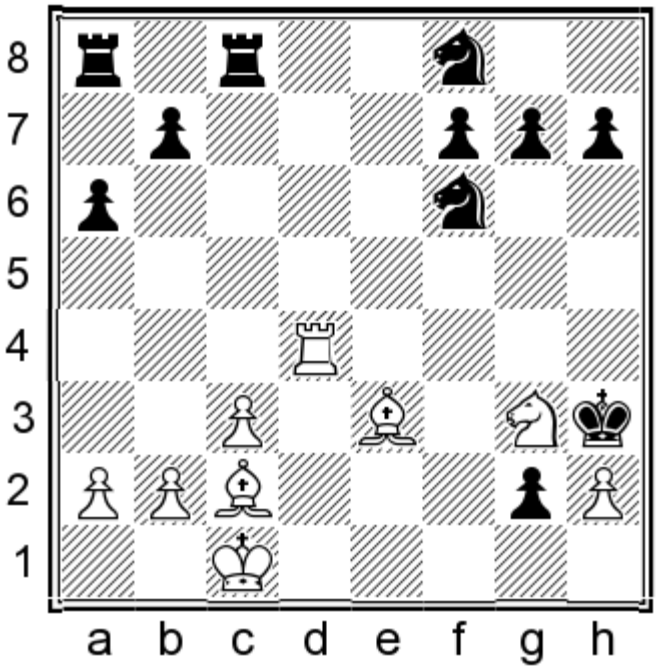
26...♔g4

26...♔h4 was not better either. 27.♖d4+ ♘g4 28.♘f5+ ♔h3



29.♗g1! The key move as now the king is caught! ♖d3 is threatened and after 29...♖d8 30.♖f4! is decisive. ♖f3 comes next and on ♘e5 ♖h4 mates...

27.♖d4+! ♔h3



And here comes the final blow! 27...♔f3 28.♗g1!+- and ♗d1 mates next.

28.♗f5+!!

On 28.♗g1 Black had 28...g5!! 29.♗f5+ and 29...g4 holds.

28...♔xh2 29.♖h4+!

Black resigned in view of 29.♖h4+ ♔xg3 30.♖h3# What a fantastic mate and what a brilliant game!

1–0

GAME 24
S. Volkov (2623)
B. Socko (2657)
Rilton Cup 2013–14 Stockholm SWE (7.3)
03.01.2014, [E20]
Annotated by Balogh Csaba

White scores a brilliant tactical victory...

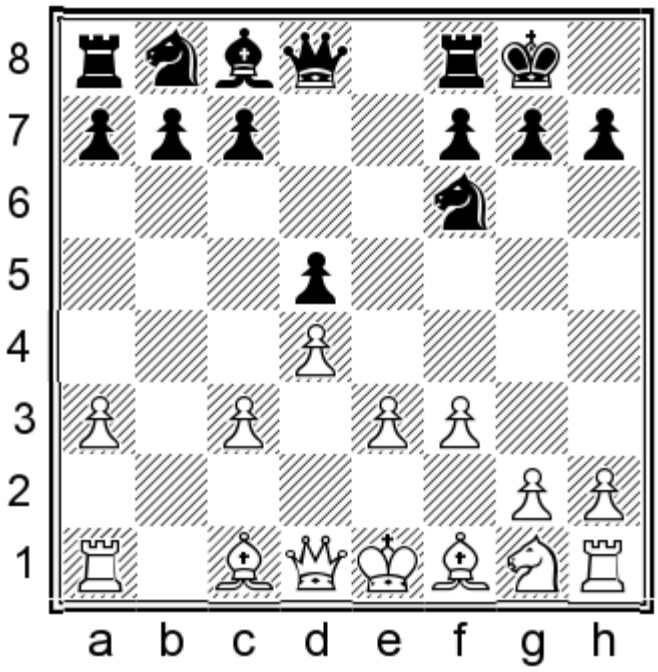
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.f3

Volkov uses his pet line, the Nimzowitch with 4.f3, which is a very effective weapon if someone wants to achieve a sharp and fighting position right after the opening.

4...d5 5.a3 ♗xc3+ 6.bxc3 0-0

The main line is clearly 6...c5 but of course the text move is also playable.

7.cxd5 exd5 8.e3



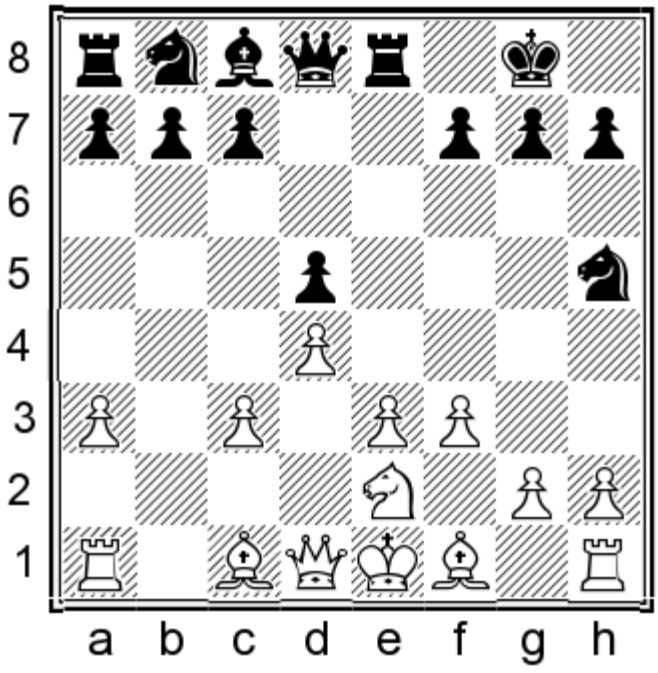
8...♘h5

A direct attempt to complicate matters. Black is threatening ♕h4+, because g3 could be met by ♘xg3 and the h1 rook falls. I successfully employed the main line 8...c5 against Volkov back in 2005.

9.♘e2

The standard placement of this knight, but in general White would have preferred first to develop his bishop to d3. Now it is a little bit stuck, which is the point of Black's previous knight move...

9...♖e8



10.g4!

The standard move in this opening. It is a very special structure. White gains space on the kingside and he is not afraid of running with the king because he has full control over the center.

10...♕h4+ 11.♔d2 ♘f6 12.♕e1!

Obviously White would be very happy to trade queens, as in the arising endgame he would have a clear edge with his great pawn structure and the bishop pair. Black needs to keep the queens on the board and should try to open the position in front of the d2 king.

12...♕h6 13.♘f4

Volkov improves on one of his own games with this novelty. Three years ago he played 13.♔d1.

13...c5!

The most direct way to open the position.

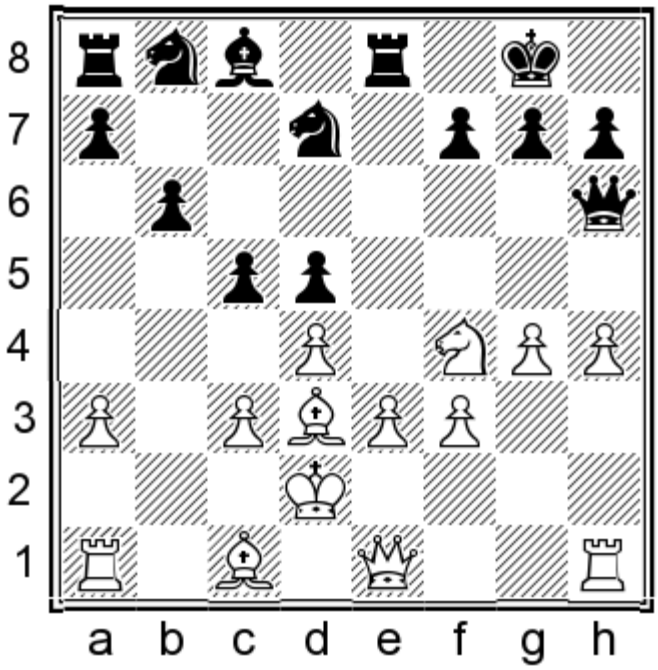
14.♗d3 b6?!

Black would like to trade the strong bishop with ♗a6, but this plan is a bit too slow. It was better to play 14...cxd4 15.cxd4 ♘c6 threatening ♘xd4. 16.♕g3 ♘d7! driving the knight to b6, escaping from the g5 threat and giving free passage to the queen. This would have been another very sharp game with mutual chances.

15.h4!

White makes use of the misplacement of the black queen!

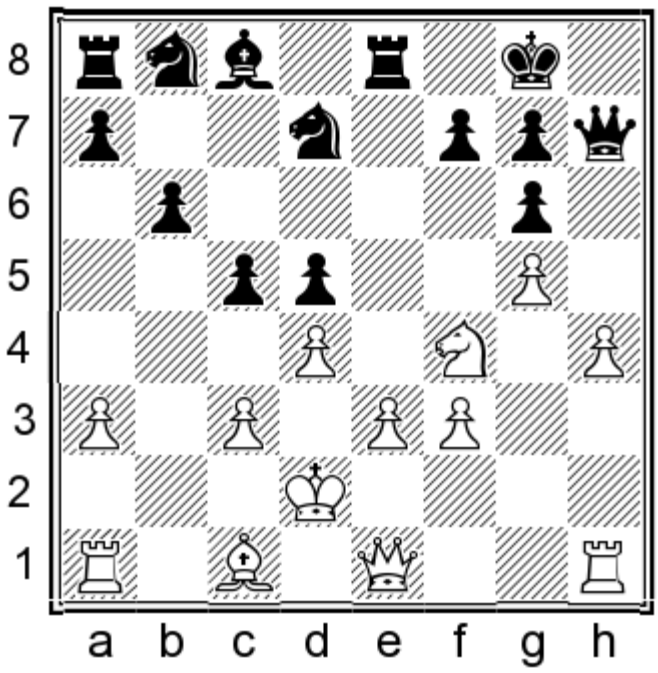
15...♘fd7



16.♗g6!!

What an astonishing move!! White cuts the queen's route to d6 and suddenly she is facing seriously difficulties to avoid getting trapped.

16...hxg6 17.g5 ♕h7



18.h5!

The queen is still facing the 'trapping' problems and at the same time White launches a very strong attack!

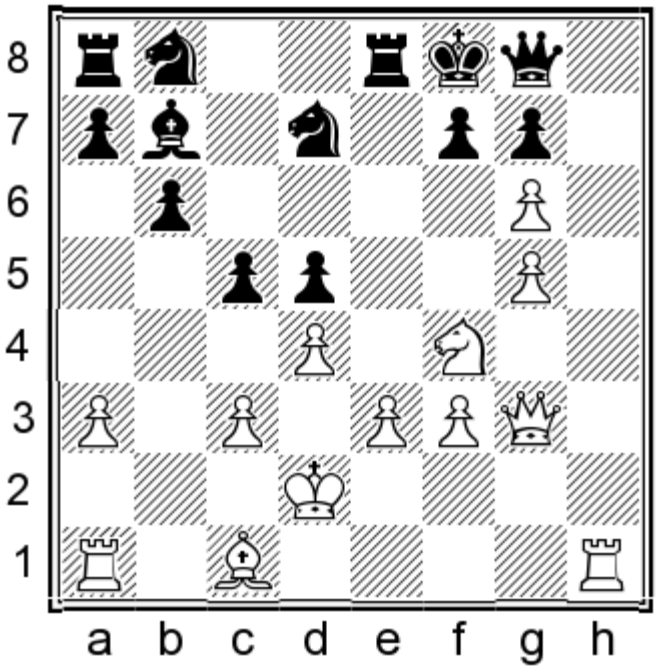
18...♔f8!

The only move. Freeing a square for the queen and trying to run away from the upcoming threats along the h-file. Black loses after 18...gxh5 19.♖xh5 ♕f5 because of the following decisive attack: 20.♕h4 ♔f8 21.g6!+- attacking the queen and threatening ♖h8 mate.

19.hxg6 ♕g8 20.♕g3!

A very calm attacking move! White improves his most dangerous attacking piece; giving a fatal check on d6 is on his mind.

20...♗b7



Black cannot successfully defend against the attack with 20...f6 21.♖h7! ♘c6 22.♘h5 ♖e7 and here the strongest is 23.♔c2! followed by ♕d6 next.

(On the direct *23.♕d6* Black could still have some hope after *23...♘a5*)

23...♘a5 24.gxf6 ♘xf6 25.♕f4+- Black collapses.

21.♘xd5!

White wins after this little combination. Volkov opens the diagonal for his queen to go to d6!

21...♘e5

Black tries to complicate the matters with this spectacular diagonal closing idea. Unfortunately for him Volkov was in top shape that day. 21...♗xd5 22.♕d6+ ♖e7 23.♕xd5+- traps the rook on a8!

22.gxf7! ♘xf7

This is the only move, all other recaptures would have lost on the spot. 22...♔xf7 23.♕f4++-;

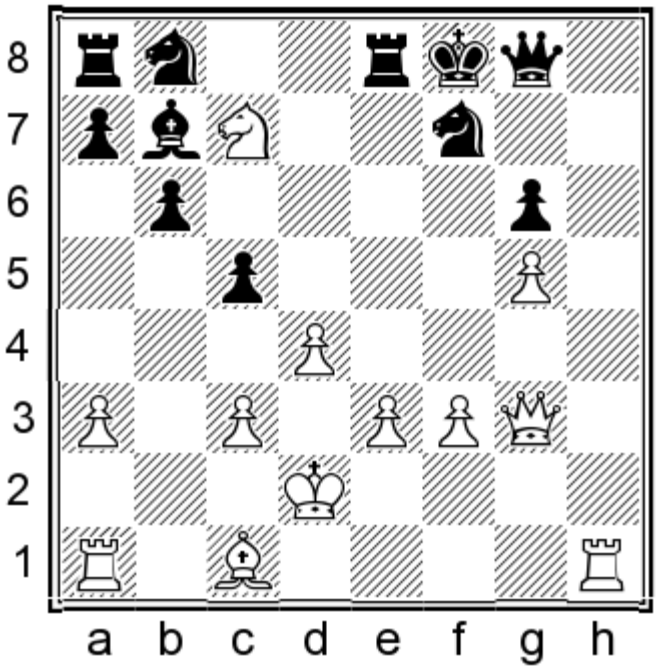
22...♕xf7 23.♖h8++-

23.♘c7

White wins an exchange. He is already doing fine materially and after his central pawns start to march, Black is going to collapse...

23...g6

The only move again, otherwise White would have sent the knight away with g6 and when it moves ♕d6 finishes the game.



24.d5!

Perfect play. White obviously does not need to hurry with taking one of the rooks. He intends to place his pawns on light squares with e4 and when the c1 bishop joins the attack the game will be over. With such bad pieces, Black can hardly fight against this...

24...♘d7 25.e4!

Following the plan.

25...♘de5 26.♔c2!

Volkov continues his extremely powerful moves. The bishop is ready to go f4.

26...♖ac8 27.♘e6+

White prefers to keep his beast of a knight rather than giving it up for a passive rook. 27.♘xe8!? ♖xe8 28.♗f4 followed by doubling the rooks on the h-file was also winning.

27...♔e7 28.♗f4 ♘c4

The blockader could not be held anymore on e5.

29.♖h4

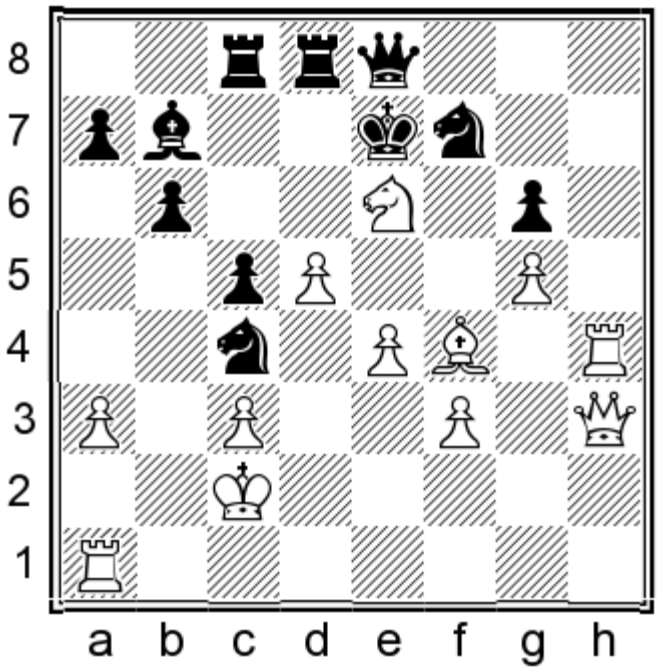
White prepares for the invasion on h7. The poor queen on g8 is still paralyzed...

29...♖ed8

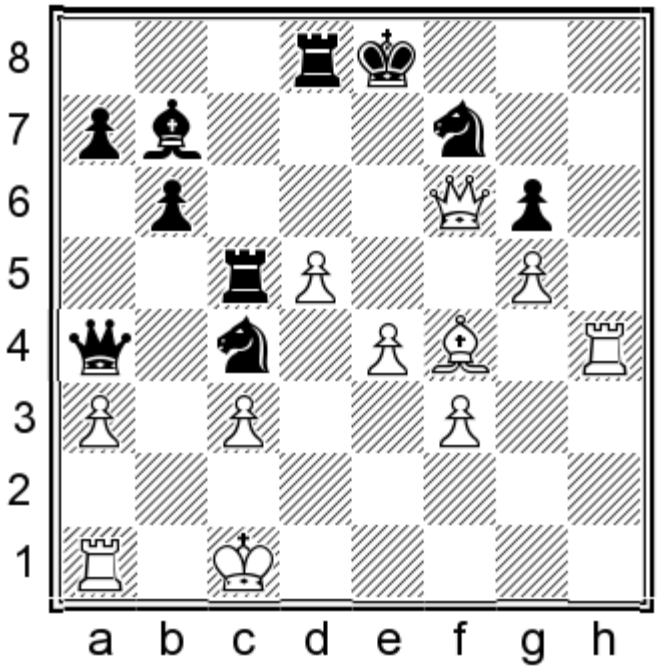
Resourceful defence. Black hopes for counterplay with ♕e8-a4!

30.a4!?

Prophylaxis against the ♕a4 idea. The machine would have finished the game in brutal style with 30.♕h3! ♕e8



31.♘xc5! ♖xc5 32.♕e6+ ♔f8 33.♕f6! Threatening ♖h8. 33...♕a4+ 34.♔c1 ♔e8



And here comes the final blow: 35.♖h8+! ♘xh8 36.♕xh8+ ♔d7 37.♕h3+! The king is forced back to the danger zone. 37...♔e8 38.♕e6+ ♔f8 39.♕f6+ ♔e8 40.♕xg6+ ♔f8 41.♕f6+ ♔e8 42.♕e6+ ♔f8 43.g6+- with mate to follow soon. Obviously a human being cannot play like this...

30...♕e8

30...♗xd5 does not help because of the simple 31.♘xd8 ♕xd8 32.exd5+- White is material up and he still continues attacking.

31.♗c7

31.♖h7+- was also winning.

31...♘e3+

31...♖d7 32.♕f4! means the end of the game. ♕f6 next is decisive.

32.♔c1 ♖xd5

The last desperate attempt, but it does not help.

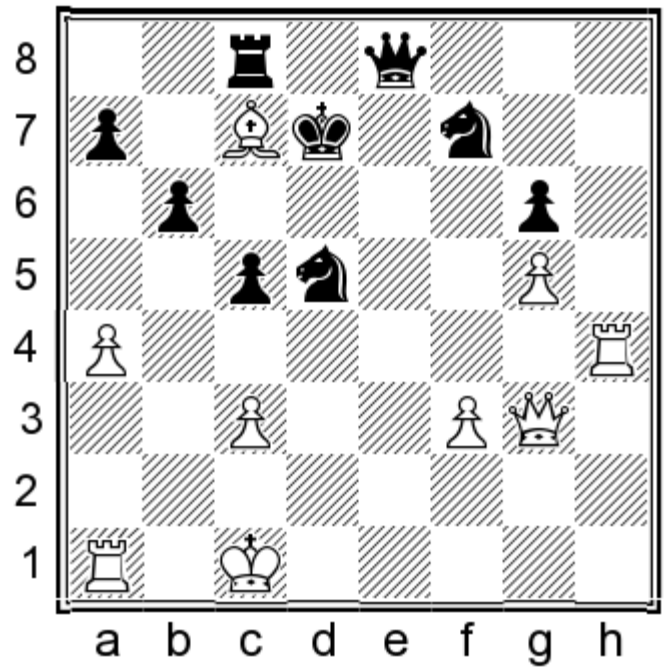
33.exd5 ♗xd5 34.♘f4

It is already White who is an exchange up and the king on e7 is much weaker than the one on c1.

34...♔d7

34...♖xc7 drops the queen after 35.♘xd5+ ♘xd5 36.♖e4++-

35.♘xd5 ♘xd5



Black is just about to get compensation with his queen, but two strong defensive moves neutralize all the threats.

36.♖e4!

Parrying the ♕e3 check.

36...♕h8 37.♗e5!

White is now out of danger and the game is basically over. Black plays on for a few more moves, but it does not affect the final outcome.

37...♘xe5 38.♖xe5 ♘xc3 39.♔d2

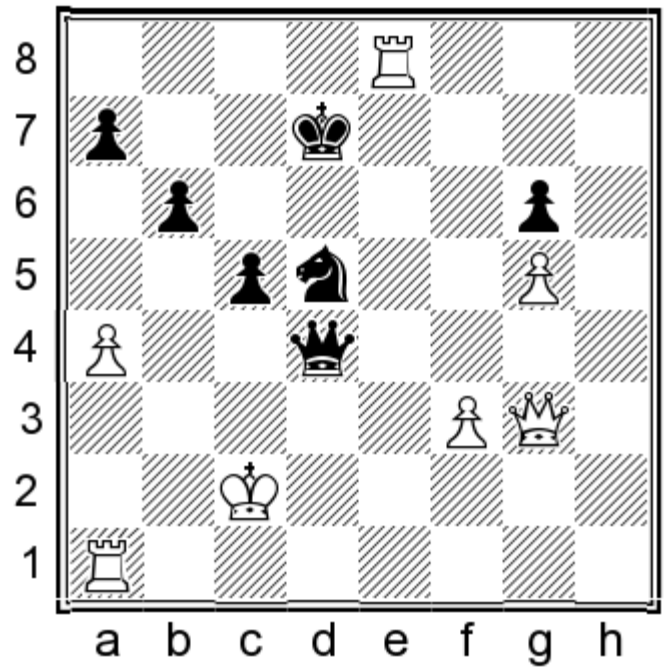
39.♔c2+- was also good enough and the a1 rook joins the game.

39...♖e8 40.♖xe8

40.♖ae1 ♖xe5 41.♖xe5 would have given zero chances. 41...♘xa4 42.♕g4++-

40...♕xe8

40...♕d4+ 41.♔c2 ♘d5 was the last chance, which would have forced White to find some 'only moves' to win the game. Although they are not difficult at all...



42.♕e5! ♘b4+ 43.♔b3! ♕d3+ 44.♕c3!+- Black has no more useful checks and the game is over!

41.♖e1 ♕h8 42.♕g4+ ♔d8 43.♕f4 ♔c8 44.♕f6 ♕h4 45.♕c6+

Black resigned. White succeeded in finishing the game in style after the brilliant 16.♗g6!! move.

1–0

GAME 25
D. Khismatullin (2714)
J. K. Duda (2563)
15th ch-EUR Indiv 2014 Yerevan ARM (4.23)
06.03.2014, [B90]
Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

Now we will see a great fighting win by the young Polish GM against Khismatullin in the Najdorf, with a nice sacrifice for the initiative and later on a beautiful mating attack! Enjoy!

1.e4

Khismatullin's main move is 1.d4, but maybe he did not take the game too seriously, or maybe he wanted to play a very sharp Najdorf. However it is soon clear that something has gone very wrong...

1...c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6

So another game in the Najdorf, Duda's main opening.

6.h3

Not the main move, but quite a tricky one. I liked to play this move as well. The idea is to play g4 and then f4 immediately, sort of saving a tempo on playing the usual f3-g4 where often later f4 is a good move.

6...e5

Duda is a real Najdorf player, as after 6...e6 7.g4 we would be back in the Sheveningen.

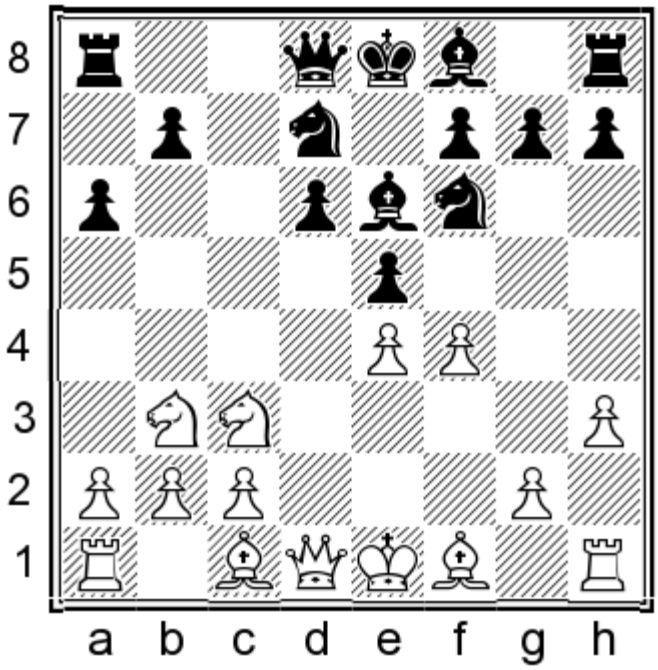
7.♘b3

Another often played line is 7.♘de2 h5

7...♗e6 8.f4

Khismatullin starts the complications.

8...♘bd7



9.g4

Very logical but risky. It is probably also best not to play 9.f5, which is quite tempting for White because it wins the light squared bishop. 9...♗xb3 10.axb3 ♖c8! Blacks wants to play ♖xc3 and ♘xe4, with huge compensation. 11.♕f3 d5! and a very complicated position.

9...b5

Giving Black the possibility of playing ♗c4, as well as the b4 push at any moment.

10.♗g2

White wants to castle kingside, taking his king away from the center.

10...♘b6

Another very typical move in the Najdorf. Black prepares against the g5 move by making ♘fd7 available, and he also gains more control over the d5 square.

11.g5

After 11.0-0 ♗e7 the position would remain very unclear.

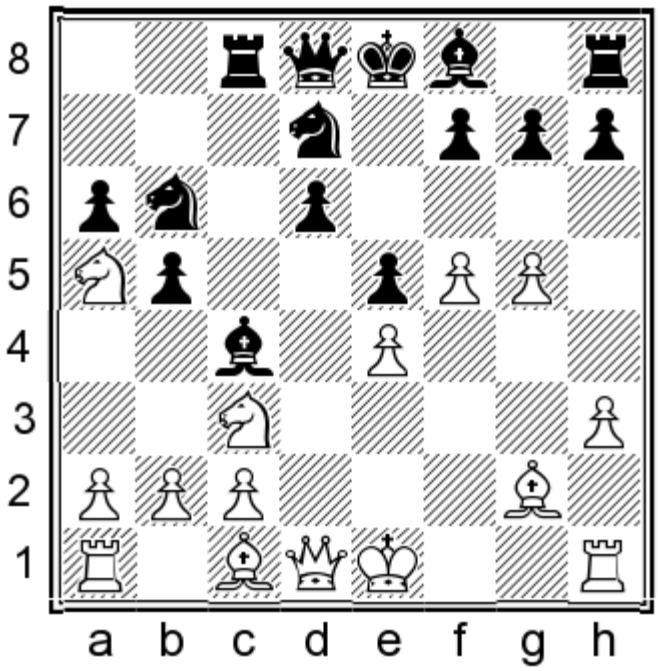
11...♘fd7 12.f5

White is trying to control the center, but such a move is always very tricky. The white king will now remain in the center and play can become very quick with a d5 push or b4, after which White's position could fall apart like a house of cards.

12...♗c4 13.♘a5

A logical move. It is very important for White to win the light-squared bishop.

13...♖c8



14.♕d2?!

Creative play, but such a move just cannot be good! 14.♘xc4 ♖xc4 15.a3 with a very unclear position.

14...b4!

A good choice. Black not only pushed the white knight to d1, but he also escaped with his bishop from the exchange.

15.♘d1 ♗b5

And now the knight on a5 is clearly misplaced.

16.a3

White at least tries to exchange the b-pawn, in order to play the knight back to c3.

16...d5!

This is the way to play the Najdorf — there is no time to waste! Duda is starting to crush White's position.

17.exd5

After 17.axb4 dxe4 18.♗xe4 Black has the very strong 18...♘c4! with extremely good play.

17...♘c4

is the most natural move. A tricky move like 17...♘xd5 might not work because of 18.♘b7! ♕c7 19.♕xd5 (*19.♗xd5 ♗c6* is good for Black.) 19...♕xc2 20.♕d2 ♕xf5 21.♘e3 and White is better here.

18.♘xc4 ♖xc4

The white king's position on e1 is starting to be a bit shaky.

19.a4!

This time Khismatullin is doing the right thing, as White should try to block the position as much as possible.

19...♖d4 20.♕f2 ♗c4

We can see a typical fighting position from the Najdorf. It is very difficult to say who is better here, but from a practical point of view it is more easy to play as Black. The idea is just simpler; to develop all the pieces and attack with all you have!

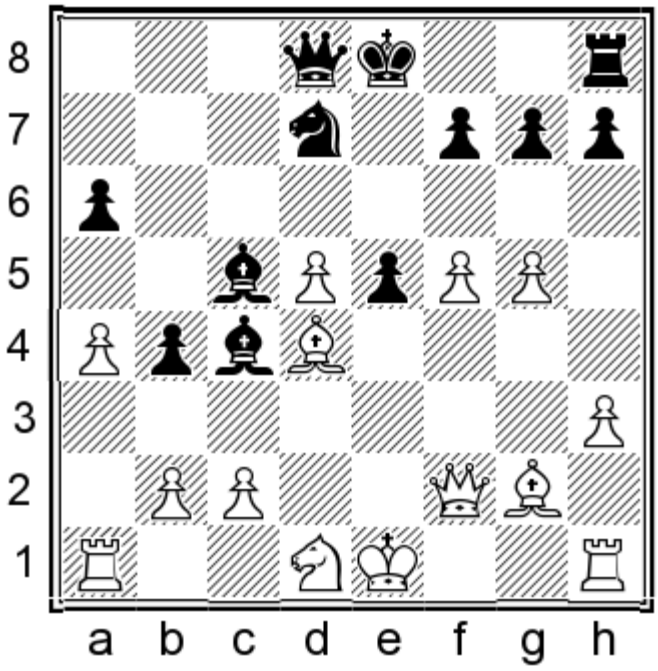
21.♗e3

White is going to be an exchange up, but it doesn't matter much.

21...♗c5

Almost all the black pieces are now in the game.

22.♗xd4



22...exd4!

Black needs an open line! 22...♗xd4? would be a bad idea because after 23.♕d2 and White is more-or-less solid.

23.♕f4

After 23.♕h4 0-0 White has 24.♗e4 with the idea of playing f6, but Black is in time with 24...b3! 25.cxb3 ♕a5+ and it is clear that Black's initiative is more than just enough.

23...0-0 24.♘f2

White continues to try and keep the position together, but Duda is wasting no time.

24...b3!

An excellent move, opening the white king even more.

25.c3?!

The game is probably almost over after this move. The best practical chance to fight was 25.0-0-0 bxc2 26.♖d3! White is giving back the exchange to gain control of the white squares. Black is better, but White is fighting.

25...♖e8+

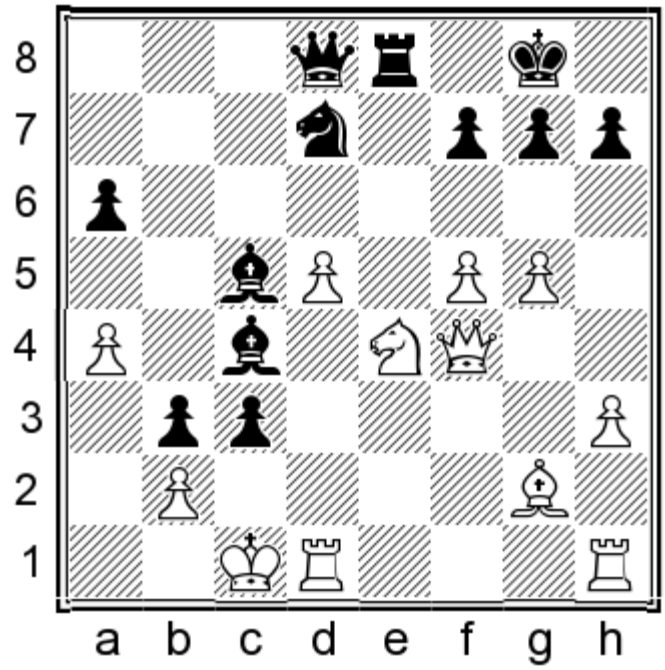
What a beautiful position! All Black's pieces are in the game.

26.♘e4 dxc3

And I guess that by now it is clear that the game will not last for much longer...

27.0-0-0

It is just too late to move the king away from the center...



Not much better was 27.bxc3 b2 28.♖b1 ♘b6 and Black is simple over-running White's defences.

27...♕b8

A cute move, but it was not really needed. The simple 27...♕a5 would end the game almost immediately.

28.d6

28.♕xb8 ♗e3+ 29.♔b1 c2+ And Black is winning.

28...♕b4

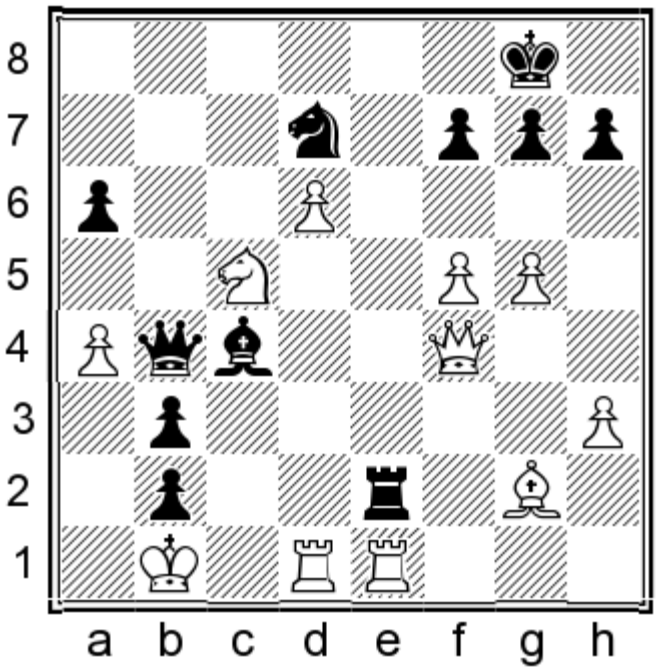
Black is going for the white king.

29.♘xc5 ♖e2

29...cxb2+ 30.♔xb2 ♖e2+ 31.♔b1 b2 followed by ♗a2 and b1=♕ would also lead to mate soon.

30.♖he1 cxb2+ 31.♔b1

And now Duda finishes the game in style:



31...♗d3+ 32.♘xd3 ♕a3

Black has almost no pieces left, but ♕a1 cannot be avoided! What a beautiful crush by the young Polish prodigy.

0–1

GAME 26
A. R. S. Salem (2558)
I. Ivanisevic (2633)
Karpos Open 2014 Skopje MKD (7.7)
03.04.2014, [B29]
Annotated by Balogh Csaba

A brilliant game was played by the young GM from the Arabian Emirates. Ivanisevic is a very creative player, and he often wins games like the following one, but this time he is on the suffering side.

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘f6

Salem is a 1.d4 player, therefore Black tries to surprise his opponent with a tricky sideline.

3.♘c3

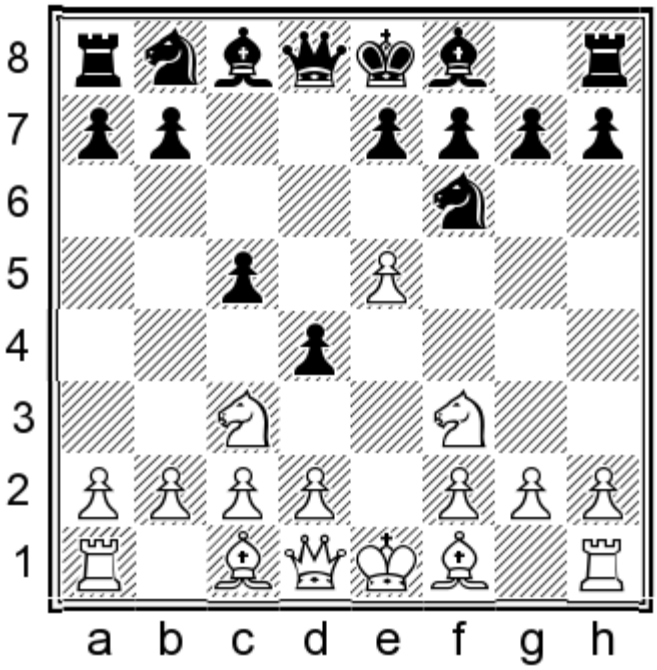
3.e5 ♘d5 4.♘c3 is probably White's best reaction.

3...d5

The consequent continuation. Black could have transposed to a classical Sicilian with 3...♘c6, but the text move follows the idea of leading the opponent into unexplored territory.

4.e5 d4

4...♘e4 and 4...♘fd7 are also alternatives.



5.♘a4!

This is already a novelty and a very strong one. It is quite rare to see one between two GM's as soon as move 5. In general, this move goes against basic principles because the knight should not be placed at the rim of the board, but there is a very concrete idea behind it! 5.exf6 occurred mainly in the previous games, although Black usually obtained a

nicely playable position after 5...dxc3 6.fxg7 cxd2+ 7.♗xd2 ♗xg7.

5...♘fd7

The c5 pawn had to be protected, but this allows the standard sacrifice which completely confuses the development of the black pieces.

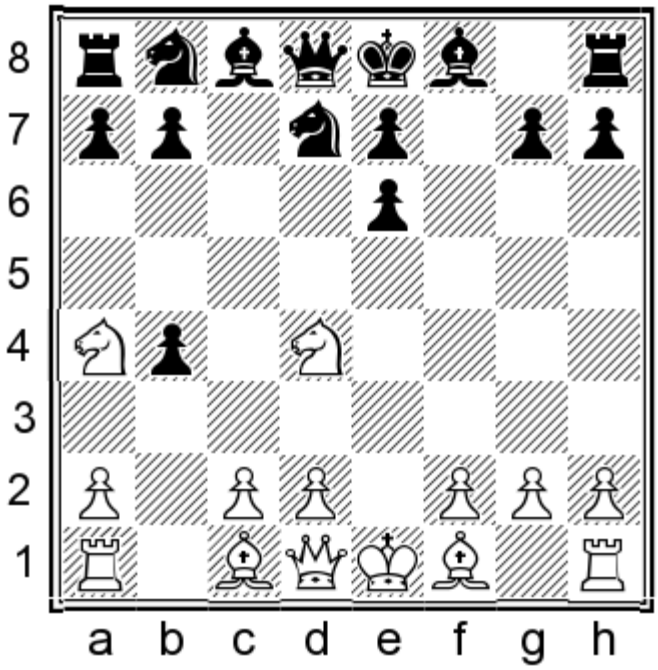
6.e6! fxe6

With his sacrifice, White has created a doubled pawn which hardly can be called a real material advantage. White might put big pressure on the e6 pawn with ♗c4, ♘g5, ♕e2 and 0-0 followed by ♖e1 and Black faces difficulties in completing his development. With his next move, White aims to improve the situation of his misplaced a4 knight.

7.b4!

White undermines the d4 pawn and also frees the way for the knight to b2-d3, from where it might jump to either e5 or f4.

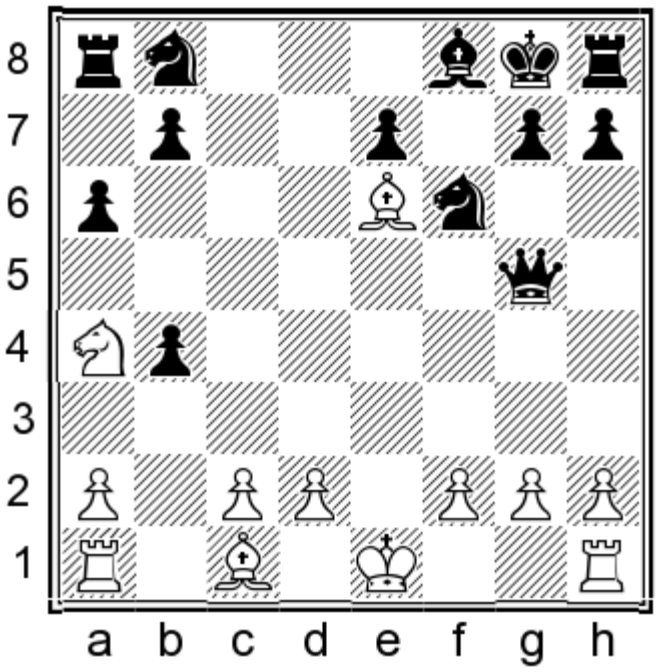
7...cxb4 8.♘xd4



An amazing position, which cannot be evaluated on a positional basis. Black has an extra pawn and the a4 knight is still out of the game, but in my opinion White's attacking potential gives him more than enough compensation for the deficits. From a practical point of view, White definitely has the easier game.

8...♘f6 9.♗b5+ ♗d7

A concrete attempt to make use of the misplacement of the a4 knight. 9...♔f7 was more natural at first sight, but White obtains excellent compensation here as well after 10.♘f3 ♕a5 11.♕e2 with a nice edge and Black cannot win the a4 knight with 11...a6 in view of 12.♘g5+ ♔g8 13.♗c4 wins. 13...♕xg5 14.♕xe6+ ♗xe6 15.♗xe6# Not bad... :)

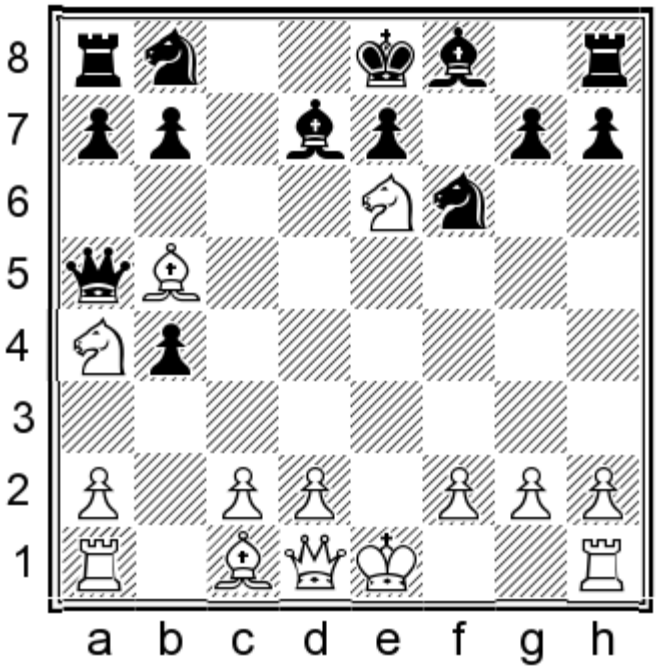


10.♘xe6!

A small tactical trick, using the fact the the bishop is pinned. White has restored the material balance.

10...♕a5

This was Black's point, but White has a very strong reply to maintain his strong pressure:



11.c4!

Great! White protects his a4 knight and also keeps his bishop on b5 to avoid the unpleasant check on e5. The harmless 11.♗xd7+ ♘bxd7 12.♘b2 would have allowed Black to trade the queens after 12...♕e5+ and without the queens on

board, there is no danger anymore for Black.

11...♔f7

11...bxc3 is simply met by 12.♘xc3! ♗xb5 13.♘xb5+- and the knight cannot be taken in view of ♘c7! 11...♗xb5 12.cxb5±

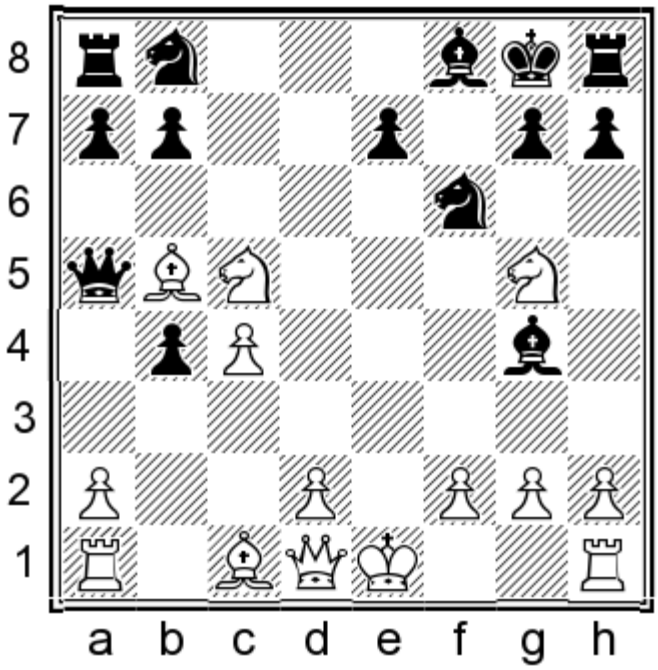
12.♘g5+ ♔g8

Black tries to send his king to safety, but on g8 it is hardly any better than it was in the center.

13.♘c5

Finally the knight arrives to the game and it immediately turns out to be an extremely strong piece. 13.♕e2± also looked very strong.

13...♗g4

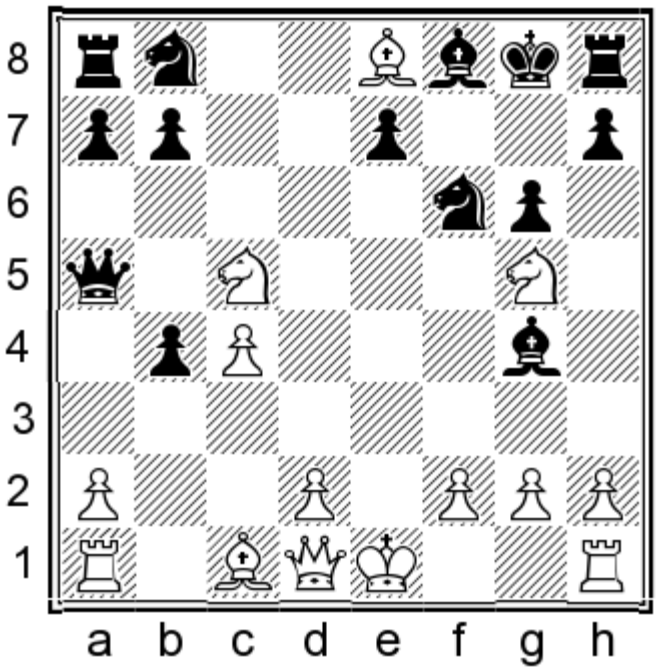


14.♗e8!!

The first brilliant move of the fireworks!

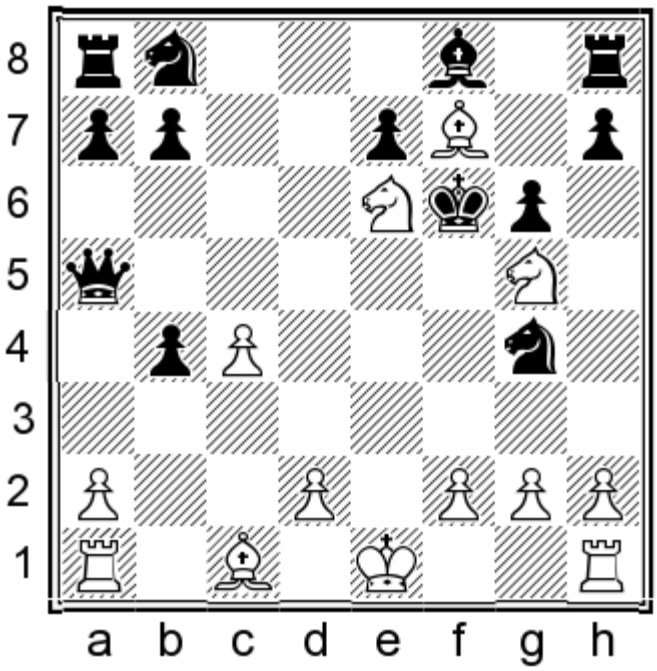
14...g6

There was no other move to avoid mate.



The following sacrifice is even missed by the computers. They only find it at a big depth or after making the next 3 moves. 14...♗xd1 15.♗f7# and 14...♘xe8 15.♕xg4+- are also hopeless for Black.

15.♕xg4!! ♘xg4 16.♗f7+ ♔g7 17.♘ce6+ ♔f6



17...♔h6 is met by the calm 18.d4!+- and Black gets mated after the discovered check of ♘e4 next move!

18.f4!!

The key move behind the queen sacrifice! ♗b2 is coming next and the haunt of the king is starting. White only has one bishop for the queen, but Black cannot prevent the fatal threats. 18.♗b2+ right away was a mistake in view of 18...♕e5+! 19.♗xe5+ ♘xe5 and Black is fine.

18...h6

18...♘c6 does not make big difference. 19.♗b2+ ♔f5 and White wins for instance after 20.h3+-

19.♗b2+ ♔f5

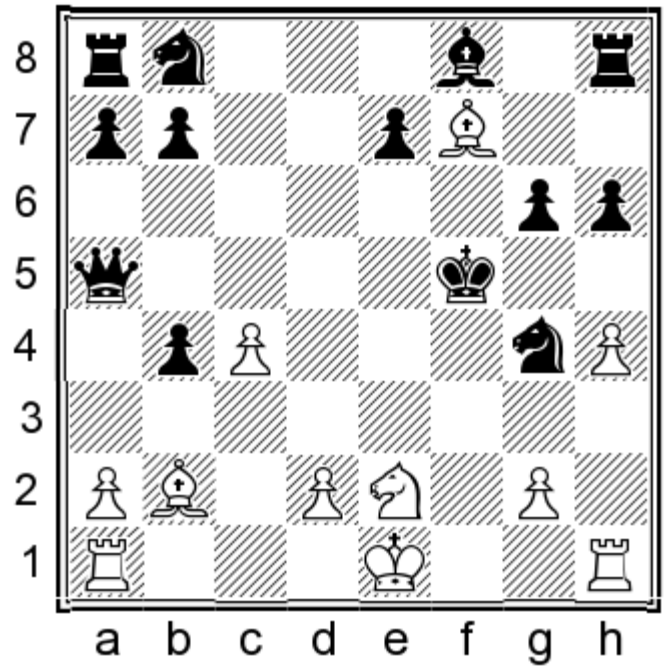
Here White goes for the most trivial — and most human — win...

20.♘d4+

The machine suggests 20.♘f3!? ♖h7 21.♘h4+ ♔e4 22.♗xg6+!+- mate.

20...♔f6

20...♔xf4 leads to forced mate in many different ways. One of them is 21.♘e2+ ♔xg5 22.h4+ ♔f5



(*22...♔h5 23.♘f4#*)
23.0-0+ ♔e4 24.♗xg6+ ♕f5 25.♗xf5#

21.♘b3+

White is satisfied with winning the queen and ending up with an extra piece.

21...e5 22.♘xa5 ♘c6

22...hxg5 23.♗d5+- is totally over.

23.♘xc6 bxc6 24.♗e6 hxg5 25.♗xg4

The game is over. White has an extra bishop and still continues attacking.

25...gxf4 26.♗f3 ♗c5 27.♗xc6 ♖ad8 28.♗d5 ♔f5 29.d3

What a game!!!

1–0

GAME 27
A. Motylev (2685)
E. Najer (2655)
21st TCh-RUS 2014 Loo RUS (2.5)
08.04.2014, [C84]
Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

We will now see a really crazy game, where at first it seems like Black's sacrifice just can't be correct, but then move-by-move his attack seems to get stronger-and-stronger and it ends with the white king getting mated-a very rare thing for the Spanish game.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5

Alexander Motylev just had probably the best 2 months of his life chess-wise. He became European Individual Champion with an amazing score of 9/11 and he was the second of Karjakin in the Candidates, where Karjakin took outright second place.

3...a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.d3

It is hard to call this move a side-line. Not so long ago 6.d3 was very popular and White was having quite good results in it. But in the last couple of years Black seems to be doing fine and games of Aronian, Anand etc showed that White probably doesn't have too much to hope for. One of the ideas of playing 6.d3 is to save a tempo on the ♖e1 move but on the other hand, White is not able to get the c3-d4 lines anymore.

6...b5

6...d6 is also possible.

7.♗b3 0-0

7...d6 is perhaps a bit more precise as Black is already threatening to play ♘a5 next and exchange the b3 bishop.

8.♘c3

Using the fact that the e5 pawn is unprotected in case of ♘a5.

8...d6

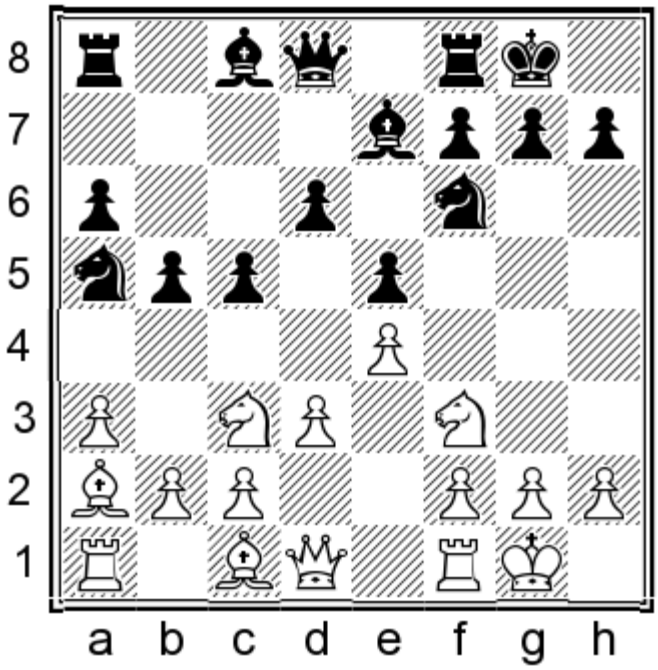
♘a5 is now a threat.

9.a3 ♘a5

is the main move. After 9...♗e6 10.♗e3 ♕d7 11.♘d5 ♗d8 12.♗g5 White is maybe a bit better. Dominguez-Caruana Wijk aan Zee 2014

10.♗a2 c5

Najer is switching away from the very main lines.



10...♗e6 seems to be the most critical. 11.♗g5 c5 with quite an unclear game, like for example in Dominguez-Aronian from Wijk aan Zee 2014: 12.b4 ♘c6 13.♘d5 ♗xd5 14.exd5 ♘d4 15.bxc5 ♘xf3+ 16.♕xf3 dxc5 17.♖fe1 ♘d7 with very unclear play, where Aronian could quite easily have outplayed his opponent.

11.b4!?

An interesting try to play for the advantage. 11.♘d5 ♘xd5 12.♗xd5 ♗b7 13.b4 ♗xd5 14.exd5 ♘b7 15.c3 ♕c7 16.♖e1 f5 and Black's position seems to be fine. Anand-Adams, Grenke Chess Classics 2013

11...♘c6 12.♘d5

A very typical move. Now Black has many options.

12...♘d4!

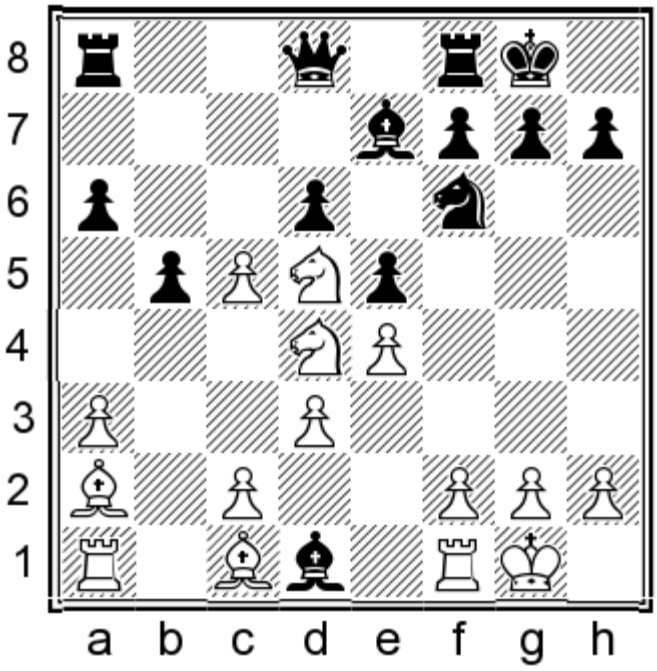
The right reaction! Black should not wait for White to play c3 next or maybe ♘xe7 and ♗g5 with a very comfortable position.

13.bxc5

After 13.c3 ♘xf3+ 14.♕xf3 the position should be close to equal.

13...♘xd5

After the immediate 13...♗g4 White has a nice sacrifice: 14.♘xd4! Who cares about a queen?! :) 14...♗xd1



15.♘c6 ♘xd5 Black already needs to give back the queen, as after a queen move White would take the e7 bishop and then the d1 one, leaving him with 3 pieces vs the queen, which is clearly in his favor. 16.♘xd8 ♖axd8 17.♗xd5 ♗xc2 18.c6 ♗xd3 19.♖e1 White is a pawn down, but he has a monster pawn on c6 and is probably doing slightly better in this endgame.

14.♗xd5

It is hard to blame Motylev for such a move, as White's position simply looks better after it. 14.♘xd4! would lead to a slightly better endgame. 14...♘c3 15.♘c6 ♘xd1 (White has a nice trick after *15...♕e8 16.♘xe7+ ♕xe7* and *17.cxd6!* winning a pawn! *17...♕xd6 18.♕e1 ♘xa2 19.♖xa2* White is just a pawn up.) 16.♘xd8 ♗xd8 17.♖xd1 dxc5 18.♗e3 and this endgame also looks slightly better for White.

14...♗g4!

This move is already almost forced, but it is a very nice positional exchange sacrifice anyway.

15.♗xa8 ♕xa8

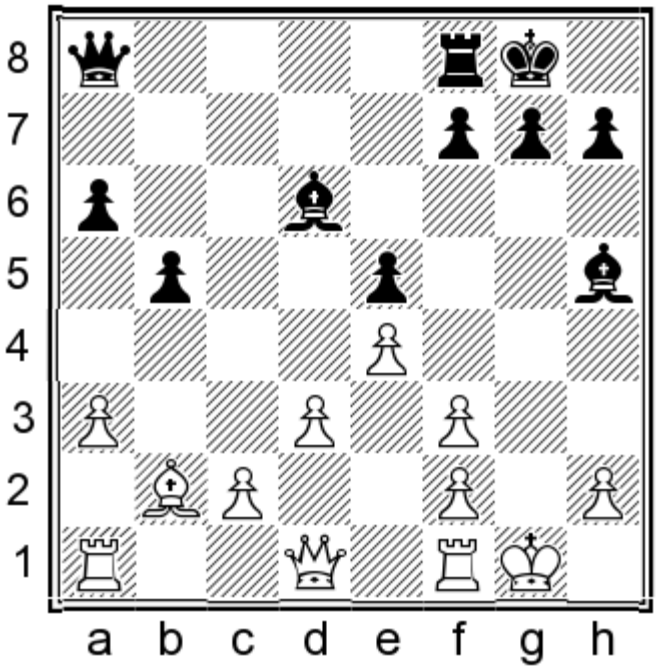
White is an exchange and a pawn up, but things around the white king could get very dangerous...

16.cxd6 ♗xd6 17.♗b2

This move is also very logical, White is developing a piece and forcing Black to take on f3.

17...♘xf3+ 18.gxf3 ♗h5

And here we are probably in the first critical position.



19.d4

Motylev continues playing very human and logical moves. If White tried to protect the f3 pawn with a rook by playing 19.♖e1 then with 19...♕d8 Black is keeping the idea of f5 in mind, and also ♕h4-♕h3. 20.♖e3 ♗c5 with a very dangerous attack on the white king. Maybe White could have tried 19.♕d2! Black has a lot of different moves now, but for example after 19...♕c8 20.♕g5 ♗xf3 21.♕f5! White would force Black to enter an endgame and I think White's position should be better.

19...♕c8

White can't allow Black to play ♕h3.

20.♔g2

In the event of 20.dxe5 ♕h3 Black just wants to mate by playing ♗f3 next. 21.♕d2 ♖e8! A very strong — killer — move. It seems as though White is hopeless against ♖e6-♖g6.

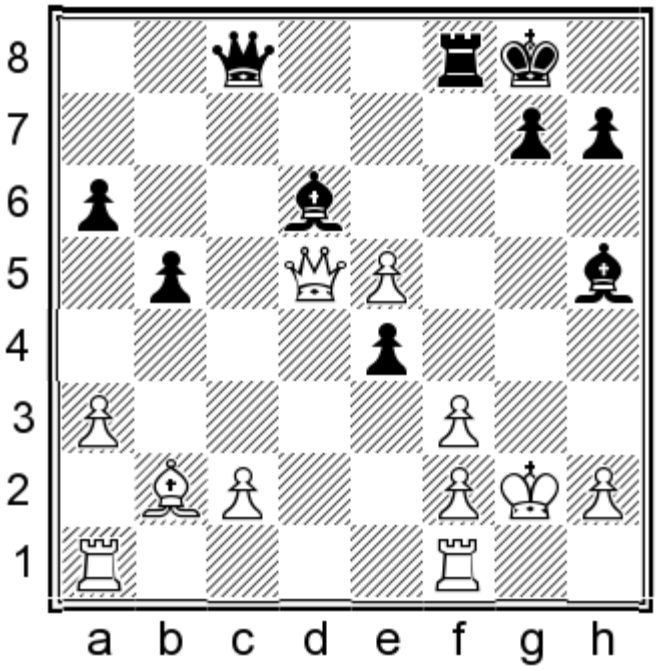
20...f5!

Najer is playing a perfect game! Black has no time to lose and brings his rook into the attack.

21.dxe5

White doesn't have anything better.

21...fxe4 22.♕d5+



22...♖f7!

Najer plays for a win and calculates things perfectly. 22...♔h8 would probably lead to a draw. 23.♕xe4 It seems like White can't avoid losing some material... 23...♗xf3+ 24.♕xf3 ♖xf3 25.♔xf3 ♕f5+ 26.♔g2 ♕g4+ 27.♔h1 Black has at least a perpetual check here, but he could play for more with 27...♗c5.

23.e6

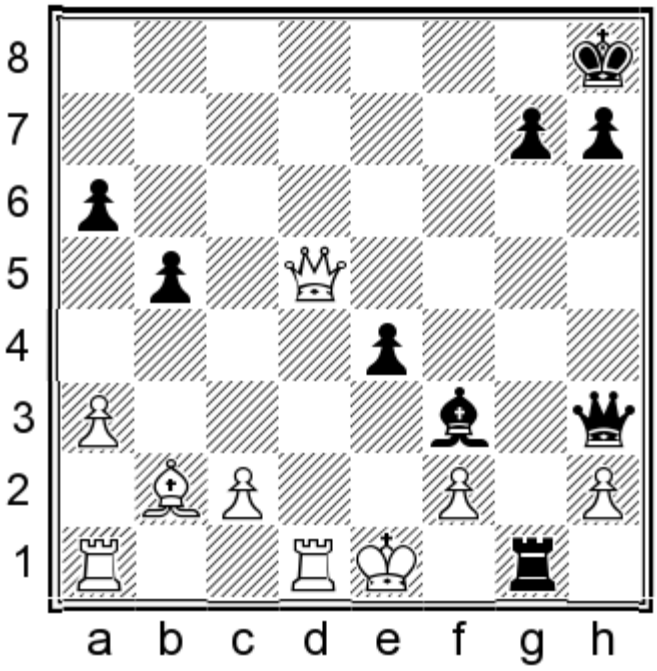
This is the difference from ♔h8; White attacks the f7 rook with tempo.

23...♗xf3+ 24.♔g1 ♖e7

Another cool and strong move by Najer. Black is already a full rook down but the position seems to be winning!

25.♕xd6 ♖xe6 26.♕d5 h6

Black is planning to play ♔h7-♖g6. 26...♔h8 was probably leading to an immediate win. 27.♖fd1 (*27.♗e5* was also losing. *27...♖g6+ 28.♗g3 h6* with the deadly idea of playing ♕h3 next.) 27...♖g6+ 28.♔f1 ♕h3+ 29.♔e1 ♖g1+

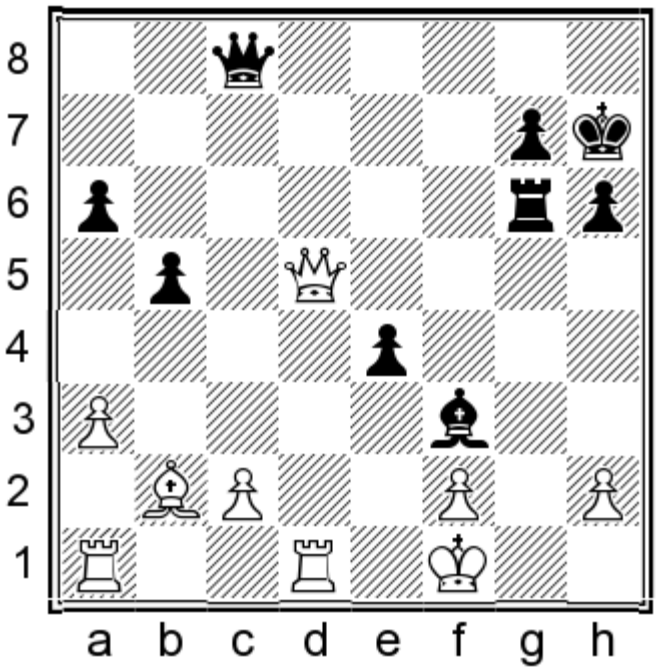


30.♔d2 e3+! Black is winning the queen and obtaining a completely won position.

27.♖fd1

By having sort of an extra tempo, the white king is in time to escape an otherwise forced mate.

27...♔h7 28.♔f1 ♖g6



29.♔e1?

A blunder in a bad position. The only chance to continue was to play 29.♕d4! finally getting rid of the nasty e3 threat. 29...♕xc2 30.♖d2 ♕c8. Of course Black' s attack looks deadly, but White could have continued the fight with 31.♖dd1

with a very bad position, but some practical chances to escape.

29...♕xc2

The double threat of ♕e2 and ♖g1 with mate leaves White no other choice than to resign. A really fantastic attacking game by Najer and also a very important one for the evaluation of this line.

0–1

GAME 28
R. Wojtaszek (2716)
E. Safarli (2656)
Vugar Gashimov Mem B 2014 Shamkir AZE (4.4)
23.04.2014, [D70]
Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

Another great game by Wojtaszek, who seems to continue being in great shape! After a theoretical battle, White managed to gain some positional plus and converted it into a deadly attack on the black king using some tactical motifs.

1.d4

Before the first move it was clear that this game was going to be very interesting, at least from the opening point of view. Safarli has showed great theoretical knowledge lately playing the Gruenfeld, and Wojtaczek, well, we do not need to say much about someone who has been Anand's second for more than 4 years.

1...♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.f3

This is one of the most interesting lines to try against the Gruenfeld and of course you must be ready to play the KID in case Black doesn't play an early d5.

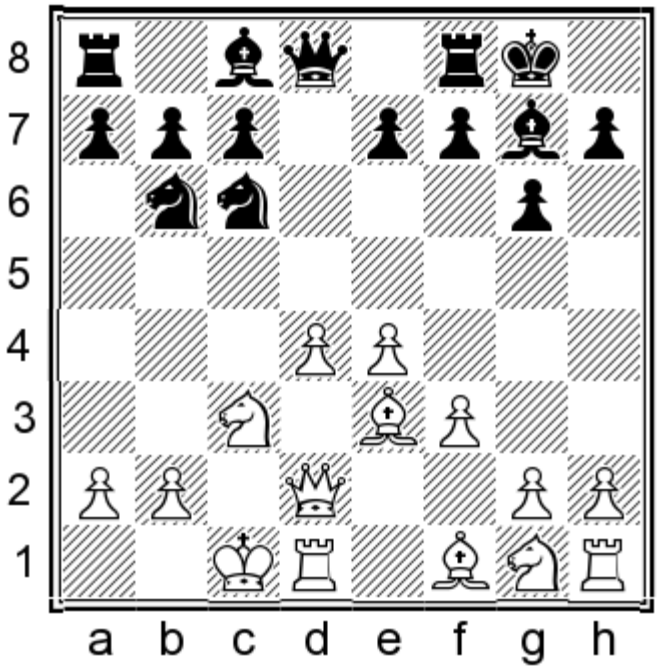
3...d5

So we are in the Gruenfeld. 3...♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘c3 0-0 and this is already the KID.

4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘b6 6.♘c3 ♗g7 7.♗e3

The idea of this line is simple. White is trying to keep his strong center alive and Black is attacking it with all he has.

7...0-0 8.♕d2 ♘c6 9.0-0-0



9...♕d6

Of course we are still following theory.

10.♘b5

Not the only option for White. Another very interesting attempt is 10.h4 ♖d8 11.♘b5 ♕d7 12.h5 a6 13.♘c3 and now Black needs to be very accurate. 13...♗xd4!

(The game Nakamura-Caruana 2013 continued with *13...♘xd4? 14.hxg6 hxg6 15.♗xd4 ♕xd4 16.♕e1* and White is already totally winning!)

14.hxg6 fxg6 15.♘d5 was playeed in the game Piorun-Svidler 2013, with a very unclear position.

10...♕d7 11.f4

is nothing new and actually quite logical. White wants to consolidate the center further and develop his pieces by playing the very natural ♘f3 next.

11...♖d8!?

An interesting novelty! Inprevious games we saw 11...♕e6 12.♘c3 ♘c4 13.♕e2 ♘xe3 14.♕xe3 ♘b4 15.♔b1 ♖d8 16.♘f3 with very sharp play, like for example in Wang Hao-Svidler 2013.

12.♘f3

Wojtaszek is pulling the game back into the “main lines”. 12.d5!? could be another interesting try.

12...♕e6 13.♘c3 ♘c4

Now we are back to the main line, just from a different move order: 11...♖d8 and not 11...♕e6 immediately.

14.♕e2

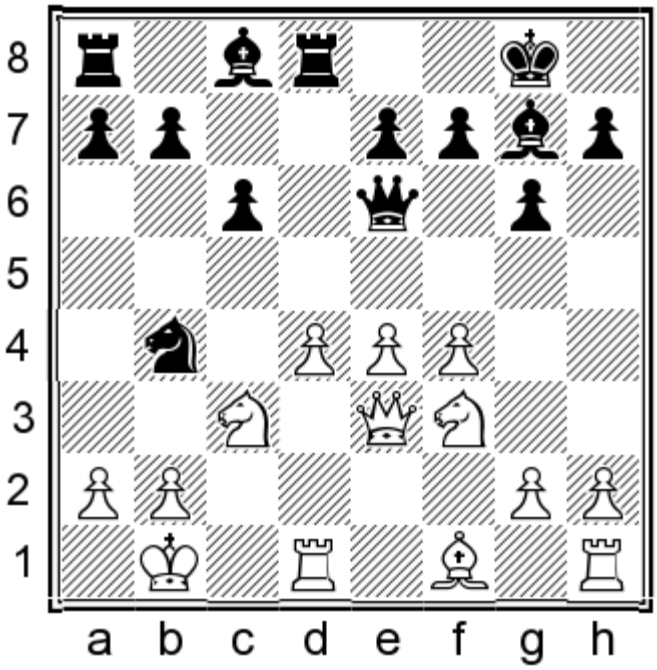
After 14.♗xc4 ♕xc4 Black would get nice play, especially because of the upcoming ♗g4 threat.

14...♘xe3 15.♕xe3

Blackhas achieved a lot. He exchanged the black-squared bishop, but gave up the center in return. The position is very dynamic.

15...♘b4 16.♔b1 c6

A solid move against White's d5 push and at the same time preparing to go back with the knight to d5.



17.♗e2

A logical move, but somehow if we look at the position it is very tempting to try something more dynamic. At first sight it is hard to see why not to try 17.♘g5 ♕d6 18.♗c4 with a nice attack on the f7 pawn. 18...e6 And after the simple 19.a3 I think White's position looks better.

17...♘d5

What can be more logical than this move?!

18.♘xd5 cxd5 19.e5

We are in quite a tricky position. If Black was in time with the development of his bishop from c8, then playing ♖ac8 with some action on the c-file, White could just stand worse because the black bishop on g7 is not going to be passive forever and can join the game by playing e6-♗f8. On the other hand, White is going to start direct play on the black king and the position remains very tense.

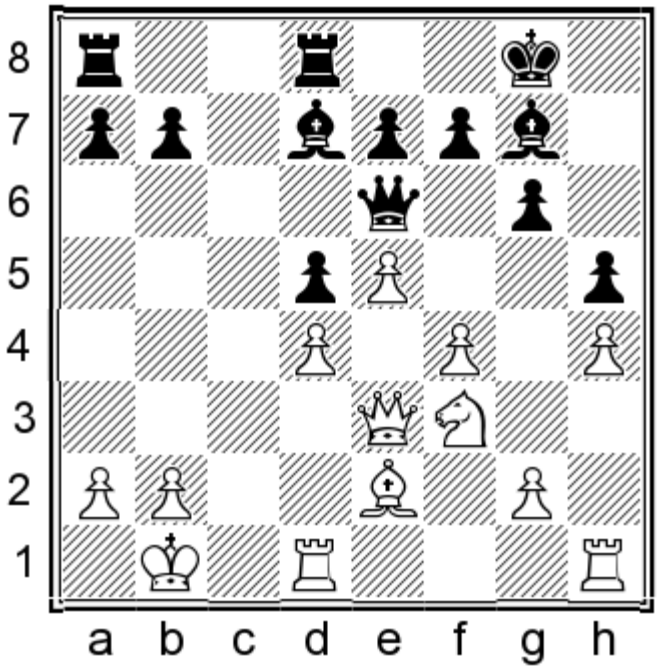
19...♗d7

Probably White is doing better after 19...♕b6 Black wants to develop his bishop to f5. 20.h4 ♗f5+ 21.♗d3 and I think White should be the one who is pushing here.

20.h4

White is not losing any time!

20...h5



If Black didn’t pay any attention to White’s attack and for example played 20...♖ac8 21.h5 ♖c7 22.hxg6 hxg6 23.g4 followed by f5, with a very dangerous attack.

21.g4!

A great move! White does not care about the sacrifce of a pawn to open Black’s king position.

21...hxg4 22.♘g5

All white pieces are suddenly in the attack.

22...♕b6 23.h5 f6

Safarli is trying to save himself with tactics. After 23...gxh5 White had the strong 24.♗d3! ♖ac8 25.♖xh5 with a deadly attack on the h-file.

24.e6!

Another very strong move by Wojtaszek.

24...fxg5

24...♗c8 didn’t work because of 25.f5! and it seems like there is no more escape for Black, especially with such passive pieces placed on the 8th rank.

25.exd7 gxh5

Black can’t let White play hxg6.

26.f5

A good move. 26.♕xe7 would lead to a very interesting position because of 26...♗f6! 27.♕e3 ♖xd7 and things are pretty unclear.

26...♖xd7 27.♖xh5

Black’s position is looking very dangerous, but the bishop on g7 is still a very strong piece which is not only putting pressure on d4, but also defending the black king extremely well.

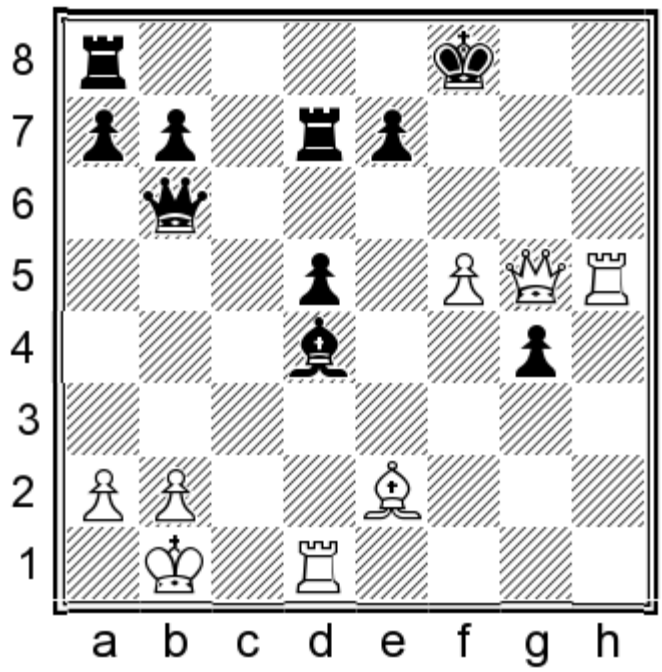
27...♔f8

After 27...♗f6 White seems to gain a winning advantage by force after a long line: 28.♖xg5+! ♗xg5 29.♕xg5+ ♔f8 30.♖h1 ♕xd4 31.♕h6+ ♕g7 32.♕h8+ ♕xh8 33.♖xh8+ ♔g7 34.♖xa8 with a probably winning endgame for White.

28.♕xg5

White continues trying to open Black’s position as much as possible. 28.♗xg4 doesn’t lead anywhere as after 28...♕f6! Black has blocked the whole board! 29.♖xg5?? is of course losing to 29...♗h6

28...♗xd4



29.♕d2!

A great move! After taking the g5 pawn, White is looking for attacking chances on the open g- and h-files.

29...♗g7

29...♗f6 didn’t help either, as after 30.♗xg4 ♖ad8 31.♕h2 White will mate on the h- or g-file in the next few moves.

30.f6!

Amazing play by White! Wojtaszek completely crushes Black's position by opening it to the maximum.

30...exf6

Black didn't have anything better. 30...♗xf6 31.♖f1 and mate will follow shortly.

31.♗xg4

Now at last it is clear that White is crushing Black. If we look back at the game it is hard to even say where Black's mistake was...

31...♖d6

Nothing really helps anymore, as White is attacking the black king from all sides.

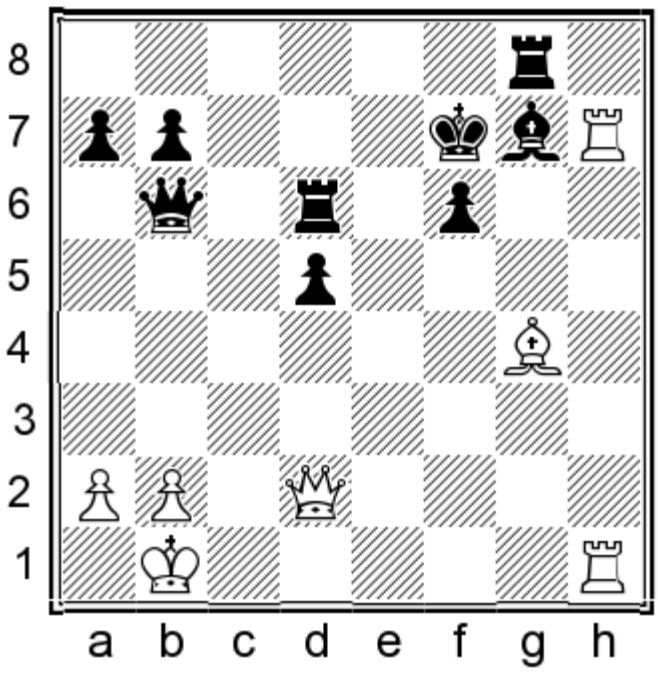
32.♖dh1

♖h8 is coming next.

32...♔f7 33.♖h7

Now ♕h6 is a deadly threat.

33...♖g8



34.♖e1!

the last precise move. White wants to mate by playing ♗h5-♖e8.

34...♖dd8

The position is lost and there are no more “good moves” for Black.

35.♗h5+ ♔f8 36.♕e2

With the double threat of playing ♕e8 or ♕e7. What a fantastic game by Wojtaszek and one of the best examples I have ever seen on the theme “attack with opposite-colored bishops”. Just amazing!

1–0

GAME 29
A. David (2579)
M. Vachier-Lagrave (2758)
Condino ITA Condino ITA (1.1)
30.04.2014, [A15]
Annotated by Balogh Csaba

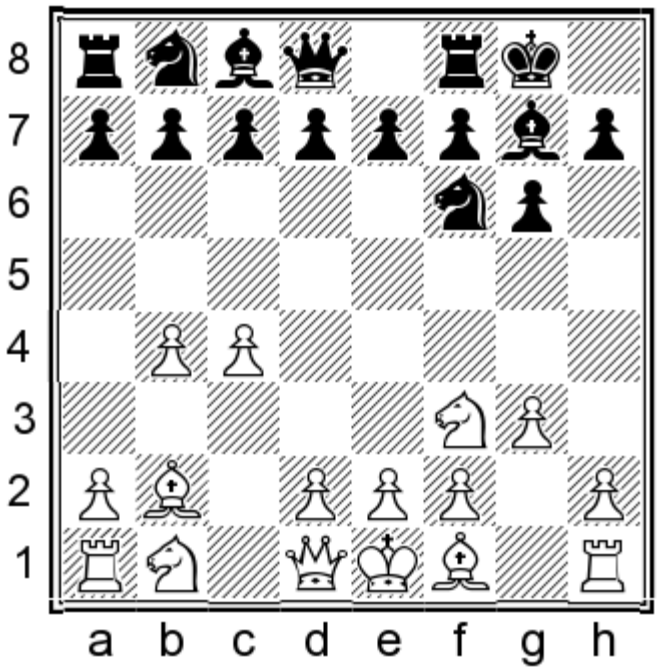
A nice example on the theme of how to launch an effective attack in the case of same-side castling.

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.b4

Vachier-Lagrave is known for his extremely deep knowledge of the Gruenfeld defence. White would like to avoid the long theoretical lines and decides to handle the position in an original manner.

3...♗g7 4.♗b2 0-0 5.g3

White fianchettoes both of his bishops. He delays the decision whether to play in the center or on the queenside.



5...c6!

Creating the positional threat of playing a5. The move has prevented the principled reply of b5, while in case of a3 Black might quickly attack the b4 pawn with ♘a6 and ♕b6. Additionally the pawn is going to be well placed on c6

because it limits the power of the g2 bishop.

6.♘a3!

I like this answer a lot. White prepares to strengthen his b4 pawn with ♘c2 and the direct a5 could be met by b5!, followed by recapturing with the knight.

6...♕b6

Vachier is a tactical player and he looks for tactical motifs right in the opening. The d6-e5 plan from the game was also possible.

7.♘c2 d6

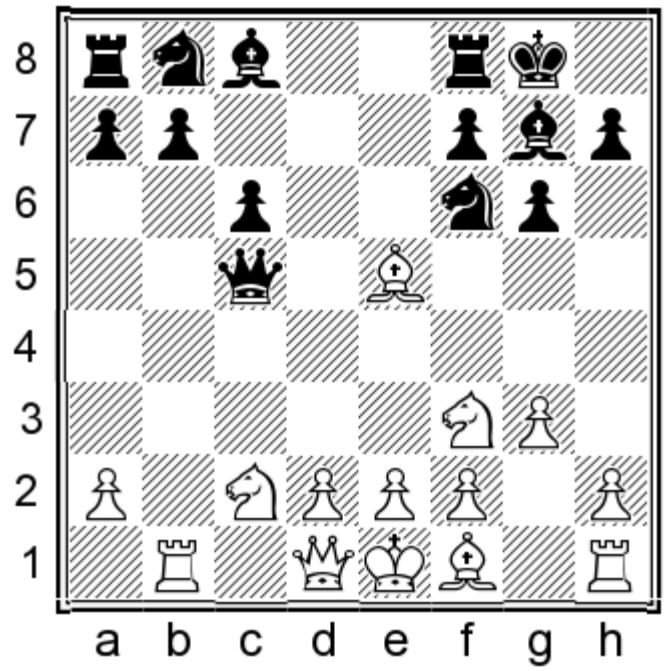
The c6-d6-e5 is the most logical way to occupy the center, because it blocks both white bishops. A principled follow-up to ♕b6 could have been 7...♘e4!? The double attack on f2 and b2 forces White to make a commital decision. 8.c5 (*8.d4* creates a nice outpost for the knight on d4, as it cannot be kicked out with d3 anymore. *8...d5*) 8...♕d8 9.♗xg7 ♔xg7 and the c5 pawn allows Black the undermining ideas of b6 and d6. Black has solved his opening problems.

8.♖b1!

Protecting the b2 bishop. On the natural 8.♗g2 Black had interesting options, like 8...♘e4 (as c5 is not an option for White anymore) and on 9.d4 a5 10.a3 ♗e6 with a quick attack on the queenside pawns, with the idea of creating holes on the light squares. 11.c5 ♕b5 and Black has the initiative.

8...e5 9.♗g2

If White was better developed, he could have achieved favourable exchanges to the pawn structure by playing 9.c5 dxc5 10.bxc5 ♕a5! (*10...♕xc5* immediately does not work because of *11.♗a3!*) 11.♗xe5 ♕xc5



White has traded his wing pawn for a central one, which would be excellent, but there are some concrete problems with which it is not easy to deal. Black is again threatening to play ♘g4 or ♗f5.

9...e4

Vachier wants to grab the initiative, but he opens the a1–h8 diagonal. I am not sure if it was the best idea. Simply developing with 9...♖e8 10.0-0 a5 11.a3 ♗g4 was comfortable for Black

10.♘fd4 a5 11.a3

Because of the fact that White could take back with the knight on b5, he should have played 11.b5! with the idea being to open the queenside, and after 11...c5 12.♘b3 a4 temporarily pushes back the pieces, but Black seriously weakens his d5 square 13.♘ba1! ♘e3 and ♘ac2 are coming next, both knights are heading to d5. Sooner or later White will also undermine the e4 pawn with d3 and he achieves an edge.

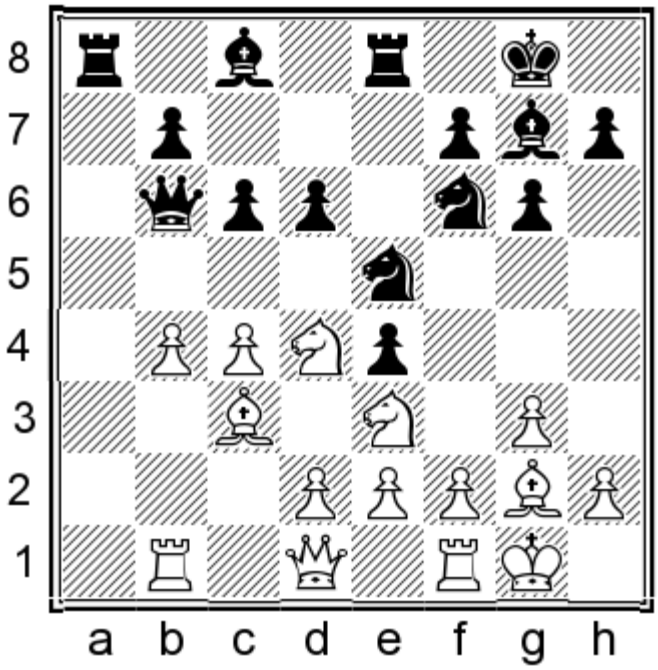
11...axb4 12.axb4 ♘bd7

Logical development of the pieces. The knight is heading to e5, which was the whole point of the e4 push.

13.0-0 ♖e8 14.♗c3

14.♖a1!? made sense. The b2 bishop does not need to be protected anymore, therefore White might fight for the opened file. If Black trades the rooks, the queen will be excellently placed on a1, strengthening the pressure on the long diagonal.

14...♘e5 15.♘e3



This is the moment when Black decides to launch an attack against the king.

15...h5

The position is closed and the center is locked, therefore such an action is completely justified. Black would like to annoy his opponent with h4. If White prevents it by playing h4 himself, he would give an excellent outpost on g4 to the black minor pieces.

16.♖a1 ♖xa1 17.♕xa1 h4

Consequently following the plan.

18.b5

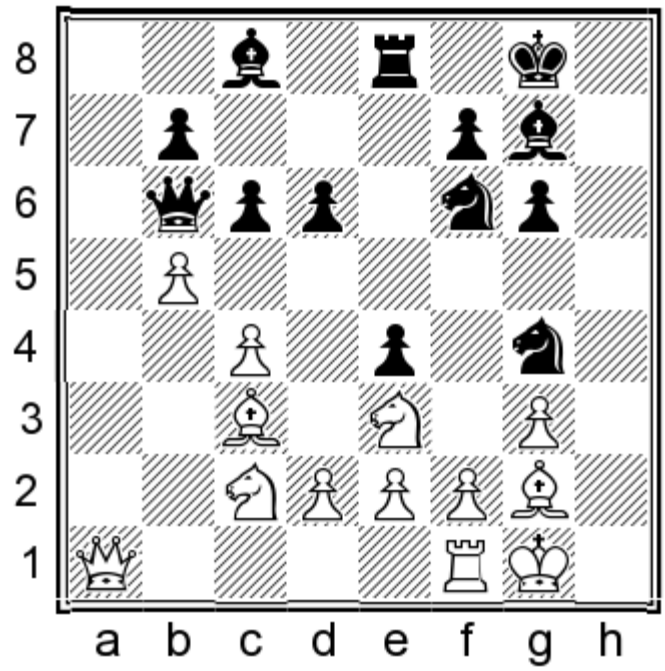
If White was afraid, he could have exchanged the queens with 18.♕a5 but at the moment it was not obvious what Black wants on the kingside, therefore White decided to make progress on the queenside, where he is better.

18...hxg3 19.hxg3 ♘eg4

The plan is clear. Black would like to land a mate on h2 and he only needs two moves to drive his queen there with ♕c5-h5.

20.♘dc2

The most logical move. White opens the long diagonal and prepares to take on g4 and put his other knight to e3. The ♕c5 move seemingly loses a piece, however Vachier-Lagrave finds a brilliant idea to make it work.



20.♘b3! should have been played, preventing the ♕c5 idea and opening the long diagonal.

20...♕c5!!

Black had to foresee the entire line which happened in the game. It required extremely good calculation.

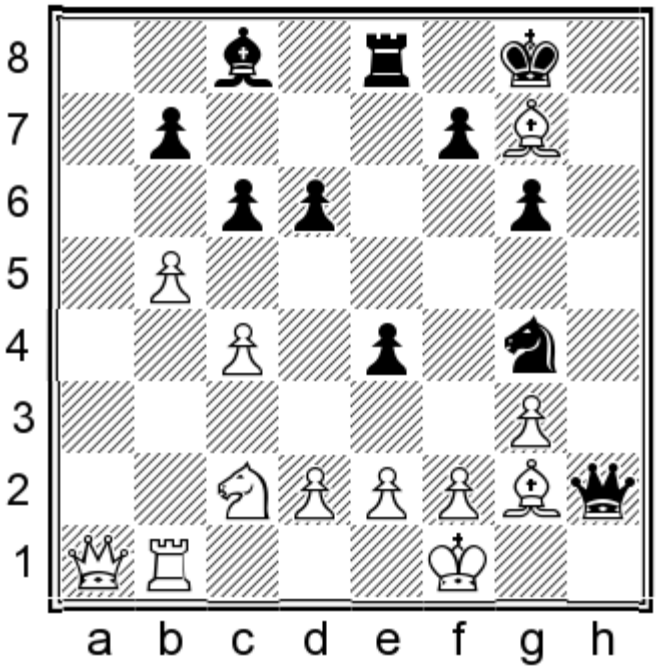
21.♘xg4 ♘xg4 22.♗xg7

22.♘e3 prevents the mate, but drops a pawn after 22...♗xc3 23.♕xc3 cxb5∓

22...♕h5 23.♖b1

White thought that there is only one check on h2 and he ends up with an extra piece. But Black had seen things much further.

23...♕h2+ 24.♔f1

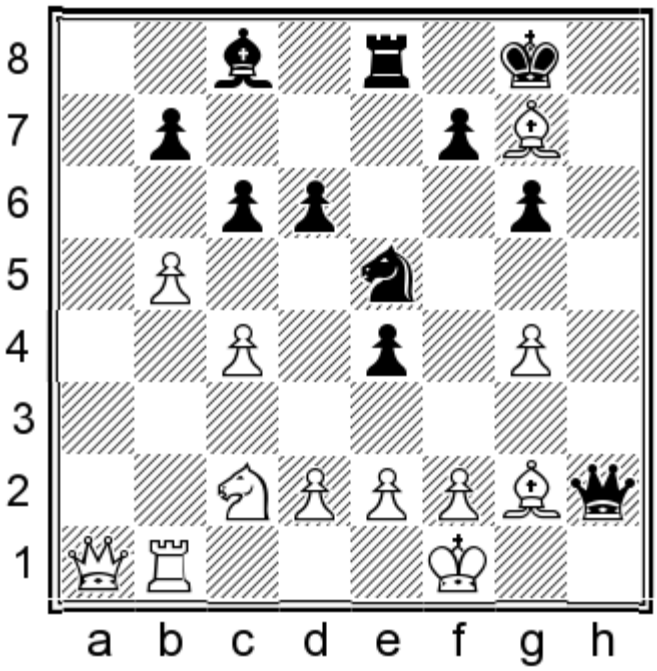


24...♘e5!!

With this calm retreat Black has prepared the decisive threat of ♗h3 with the idea of ♕h1 mate! There is no adequate defence against it.

25.g4!?

A very nice defensive attempt along the 3rd rank, but Vachier finds another beautiful tactical blow!



25.♘e3 is refuted by 25...♗h3 26.♔e1 ♕g1+ 27.♗f1 ♔xg7–+ and White cannot survive for long with such a pin on the back rank. Black simply wants to escape the pin with ♔g8 followed by ♘g4, deflecting the defender of the f1 bishop.

25...♘f3!!

What a move! The only way to win! White gets mated in any case. 25...♗xg4? is bad in view of 26.♗xe5! attacking the queen, so ♗h3 does not work at once, while after 26...♖xe5 27.♖b3! and ♖g3 protects everything!

26.exf3

Otherwise White would have played ♕g1.

26...exf3 27.♗xf3 ♗xg4!

The point of ♘f3! Mate is now inevitable and White resigned. 27...♗xg4 28.♗xg4

(*28.♗g2 ♗e2+ 29.♔e1 ♕g1+ 30.♗f1 ♕xf1#; 28.♕c3 ♗h3+ 29.♗g2 ♕xg2#; 28.♘e3 ♗xf3 29.♔e1 ♕g1#*)

28...♕h1# It is amazing that from seemingly nowhere Black suddenly gave mate in a few moves.

0–1

GAME 30
B. Jobava (2688)
S. Mamedyarov (2799)
World Rapid Ch 2014 Dubai UAE (3.1)
16.06.2014, [A45]
Annotated by Balogh Csaba

We are in the 3rd round of the World Rapid Championships. The ratings should not confuse anyone — those are the rapid ratings. The tournament was played with a 15+10 time control. Jobava won a brilliant game in his usual creative style.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 d5 3.♗f4

Jobava likes this kind of unusual opening. He already played it in several games.

3...♗f5

The most natural reaction. Black develops his bishop before playing e6 and c5. If he succeeds in doing this he might quickly take over the initiative because of the misplacement of the white knight on c3, therefore White should continue with unusual moves.

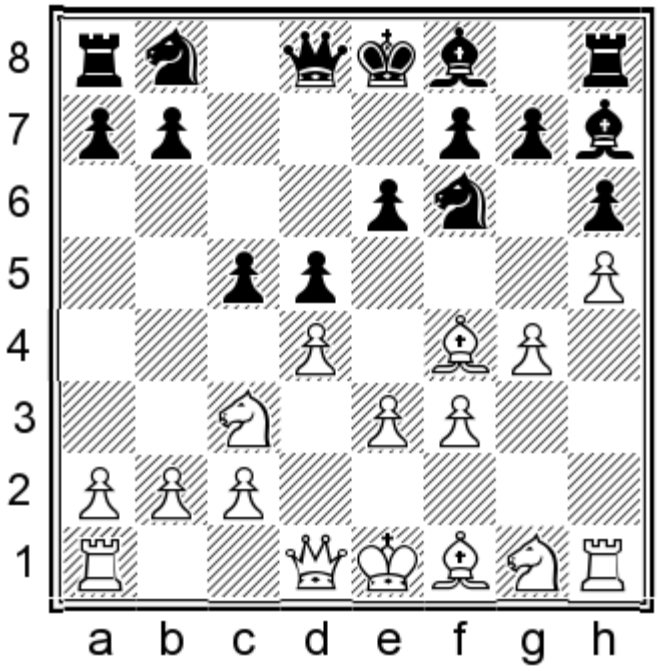
4.f3 e6 5.g4!

Consequent play. There is no way back for White, he must do something extraordinary in the spirit of the position to keep the initiative.

5...♗g6 6.h4 h6 7.e3 c5

This is the deviation from a previous Jobava game. It seems to be more circumspect to take control over the b5 square before pushing c5. 7...a6 8.h5 ♗h7 9.♗d3 c5 followed by ♘c6 was completely fine for Black in the Jobava-Hovhannisyan, Yerevan 2014 game.

8.h5 ♗h7



9.♘b5!

White is finally able to consolidate his pawn formation with c3.

9...♘a6

There was no other way to parry the ♘c7 threat, but now the knight on b5 becomes extremely annoying, because it cannot be sent away with a6 or c6. To be able to play a6, Black should leave with his knight, but it has a duty to control the c7 square and the rook cannot replace it from c8, because it is also busy guarding the a7 pawn.

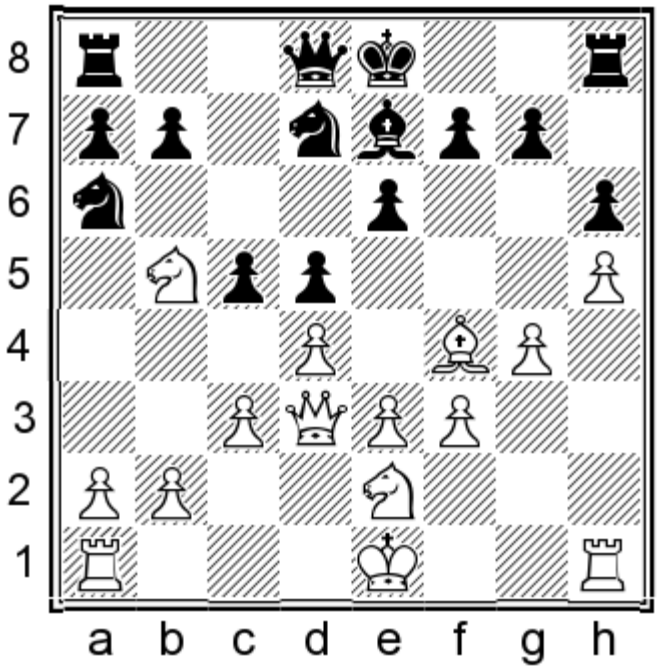
10.c3 ♗e7 11.♗d3

It is time to finish development.

11...♗xd3 12.♕xd3 ♘d7

Black prepares to castle, but first he prevents the g5 attacking potential. Black cannot get rid of the b5 knight with 12...♕b6 with the idea of c4, because White can fortify it with 13.a4

13.♘e2



Grabbing the bishop with 13.♘d6+? would positonally be a good idea, but it does not work directly in view of 13...♗xd6 14.♗xd6 ♕b6! with a double attack.

13...0-0

The first stage of the game is over. We can say that White has some space advantage, but Black has a flexible position without any weaknesses. White might play for a kingside attack, while Black should aim for a central break with e5. We have reached a playable position for both sides with mutual chances and two highly creative players start to play very exciting chess.

14.a4

A useful waiting move to stabilize the situation of the b5 knight.

14...♗f6

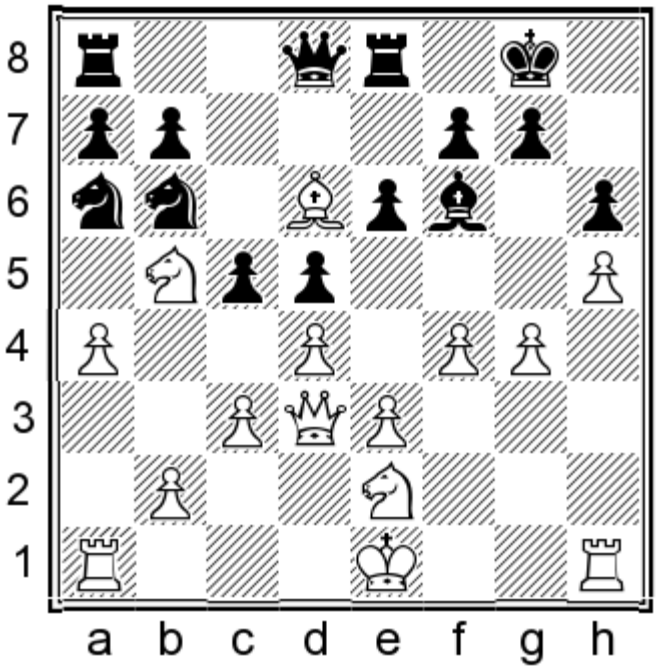
Mamedyarov chooses the most direct way to push e5, but it allows White a good possibility to prevent it and at the same time improve his position. 14...♖e8 followed by ♗f8 and e5 was probably stronger, but the text is also very natural.

15.♗d6! ♖e8 16.f4!

Preventing the e4 break forever, and the f4 pawn also supports the g5 break. The only drawback could be the hole on e4, but Black is first of all very far from driving his knight there, and even if he succeeds White could trade it with ♘g3.

16...♘b6

Black hopes to get his knight to c4.



16...♗h4+ It doesn’t make much sense to force the king to move, because the position is closed and the king even feels comfortable in the middle of the board. 17.♔f1 followed by ♔g2 or ♔d1–c2 is also possible.

17.g5!

Jobava has very good tactical ‚feelings’. He sacrifices a pawn to explode the pawn structure in front of the king. 17.b3? is wrong because it only helps the black knight to occupy the c4 square. 17...c4!: 17.dxc5 It is not logical to open the center because White has just launched a flank attack and to promote it succesfully, the center should be closed. 17...♘c4

17...hxg5 18.h6! g6

Black must keep the h-file closed.

19.fxg5 ♗xg5 20.h7+ ♔g7

The best chance. Black should control the f7 and g6 squares with the king. 20...♔h8 is worse in view of 21.♗e5+! f6 22.♘d6! (♘f7 is threatened) 22...♖f8 23.♗f4! The g6 pawn is hanging and the attack seems to break through. 23...♗xf4 24.♘xf4 ♕xd6 loses to 25.♘xg6+ ♔g7 26.0-0-0+- and ♖dg1 next wins.

21.♗e5+!

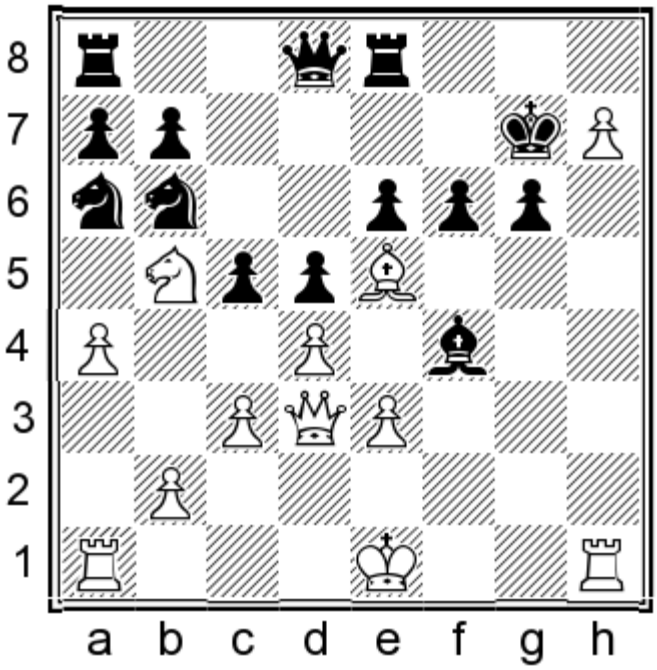
White must lead the attack energetically, otherwise Black consolidates his position and maintains an extra pawn.

21...f6

On 21...♗f6 22.♘d6 ♖f8 White wins nicely with 23.♘xf7! ♖xf7 24.♘f4!+- There is no defence against the ♕xg6 and ♘xe6 threats.

22.♘d6

The winning move was 22.♘f4! ♗xf4



(*22...fxe5* is nicely refuted by *23.h8=♕+! ♖xh8 24.♕xg6+ ♔f8 25.♖xh8+ ♔e7 26.♕xe6#*)

23.♖g1!! It is very difficult to find such moves in a rapid game, even for such a resourceful player like Jobava. Black has no adequate defence. 23...g5

(*23...♗g5* does not help because of the pin. *24.♖xg5+-*)

24.exf4+- and the attack is breaking through: 24...fxe5 25.♖xg5+ ♔h8 26.♕g6 ♕e7

(*26...♖e7 27.♕f6++-*)

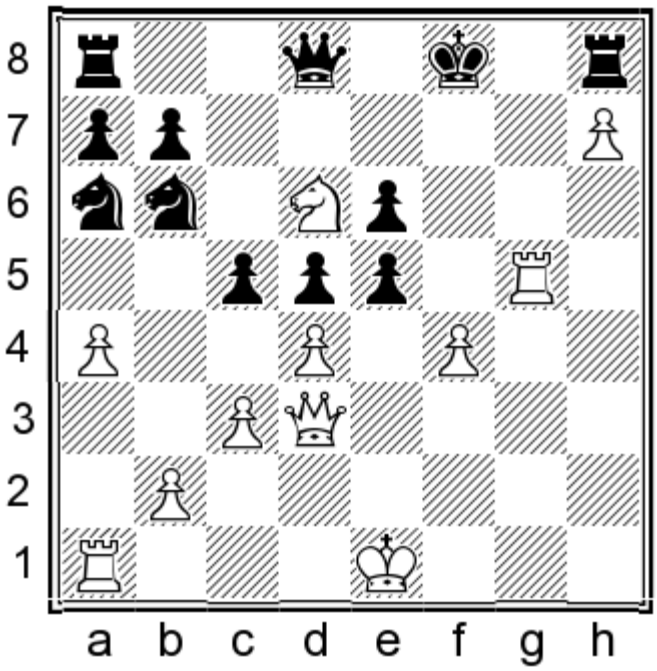
27.♘d6! Trying to deflect the queen from the g7 square with the threat of ♘f7. 27...♖f8 28.0-0-0 and Black gets mated. An illustrative line is: 28...♘c4 29.♕g8+! ♖xg8 30.hxg8=♕+ ♖xg8 31.♖h1+ ♕h7 32.♘f7#

22...♖h8

White is behind in material and his pieces are hanging. There is no time to retreat, he must create new threats with each move. Objectively the only move was 22...fxe5 23.♘xe8+ ♕xe8 24.h8=♕+ ♕xh8 25.♖xh8 ♖xh8 26.0-0-0 and despite the material advantage, the machine says Black has good drawing chances -but I believe the extra queen should give White excellent winning chances.

23.♘f4! ♗xf4 24.♗xf4

The same idea as in the 22.♘f4 line was winning again: 24.♖g1!! g5 (*24...♗g5 25.♖xg5+-*) 25.exf4 fxe5 26.♖xg5+ ♔f8

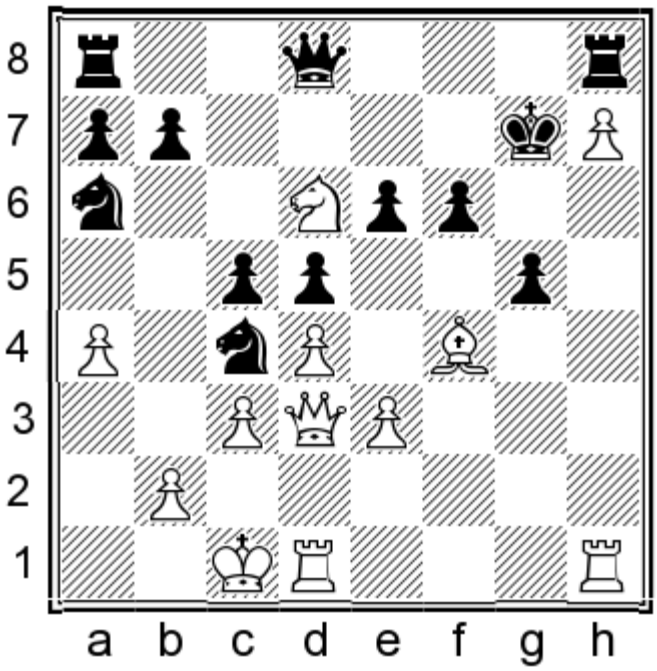


27.♖g8+! ♖xg8 28.hxg8=♕+ ♔xg8 29.♕g6++- and mate on f7 will follow on the next move, either with the queen or the knight.

24...g5 25.0-0-0!

Bringing the other rook to the attack. ♖dg1 followed by sacrifices on g5 are in the air.

25...♘c4



On 25...gxf4 White wins after almost all moves, but the most beautiful is 26.♕g6+!! ♔xg6 27.♖dg1#

26.♖h6!?

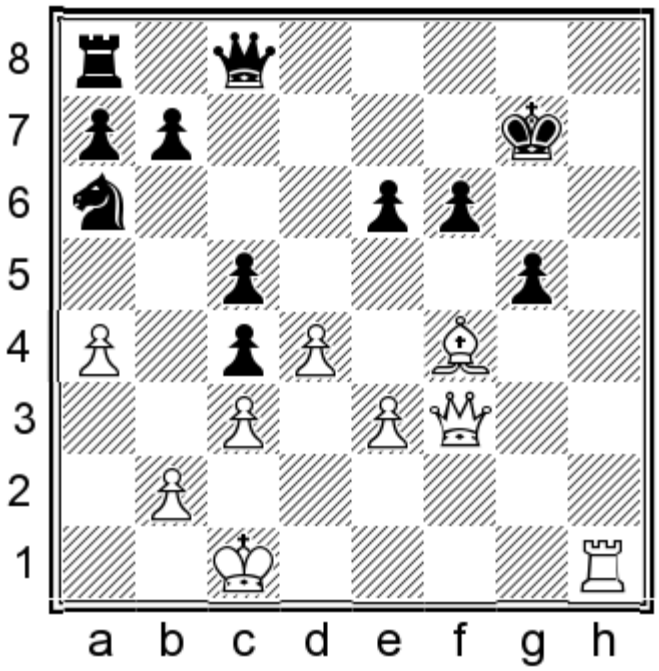
What a fantastic move! White wins material because Black can only prevent the ♕g6 threat if he sacrifices his queen. However it was even stronger to play 26.♘xc4 dxc4 27.♕e2 with the idea to continue the attack with ♕h5. 27...♖xh7

(*27...gxf4 28.♕g2+ ♔f7 29.♖hg1+-*)

28.♖xh7+ ♔xh7 29.♕h5+ ♔g7 30.♖h1 ♕h8

(*30...gxf4 31.♖g1+ ♔f8 32.♕h7!+-* A silent move instead of some checks, White creates the inevitable mate threat on g7.)

31.♕f3! ♕c8



32.♗xg5!! fxg5 33.♖f1! and Black cannot prevent the ♕f6/♕f7 threats followed by ♖h1. 33...♕f8 34.♕xb7++-

26...♔xh6

is the only move to avoid getting mated, but now the queen falls. 26...♘xd6 27.♕g6+ ♔f8 28.♗xd6+ ♕xd6 29.♕xf6+ ♔e8 30.♕xh8++-

27.♘f7+ ♔g7 28.♘xd8 ♖axd8

We have reached another critical position. White is just slightly ahead materially and after some harmless moves like ♗g3 ♖xh7 the position would already be fine for Black. White needs to continue his attack and he can do it in different ways:

29.b3

It is logical to push back the active knight with tempo. 29.♖g1!? was also good with the idea of 29...♖xh7 30.♗xg5! fxg5 31.♖xg5+ ♔h8 32.♕f1!! ♖g7 33.♕f6 ♖dd7 34.♖h5+ ♔g8 35.♕xe6+ ♖df7 36.♖xd5+- Black has serious problems.

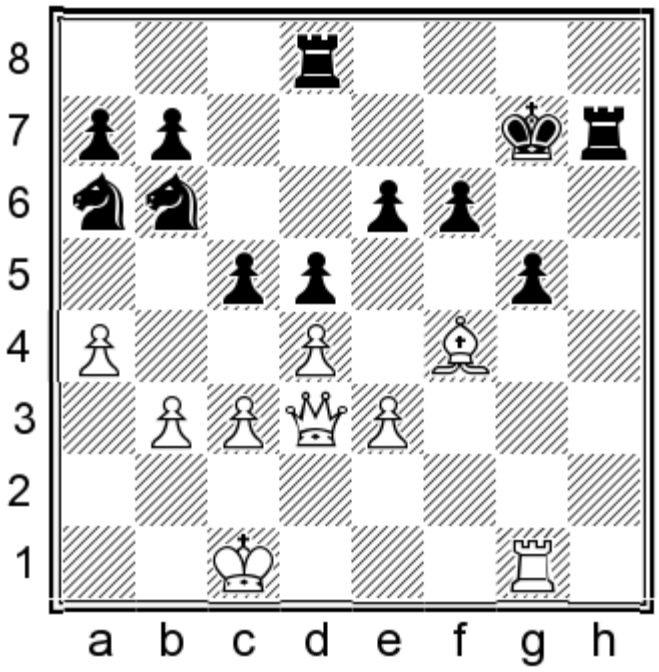
29...♘b6

Opening the g-file should not come into Black's mind: 29...gxf4 30.♖g1+ ♔f8 31.♕g6 ♔e7 32.bxc4+-

30.♖g1!

Jobava prepares the decisive blow on g5.

30...♖xh7



31.e4!

Another very spectacular attacking move, just like 26.♖h6. Without a sacrifice, White wants to destroy his opponent's pawn structure in front of the king with e5, while dxe4 ♕xe4 opens new threats on b7 and e6. 31.♗xg5 was also winning. 31...fxg5 32.♖xg5+ ♔h8 33.dxc5! with a deadly threat on d4, so Black has to play 33...♘d7 but now 34.c6! and the knights are losing their stability. Black loses material.

31...♔h8

31...dxe4 32.♕xe4+-;

31...cxd4 32.e5!+-

32.e5!

The final blow! Black is helpless against the threats, but Jobava had to foresee the key move a few moves later.

32...gxf4 33.♕g6 ♖f8 34.exf6

Black resigned in view of 34.exf6, and f7 is coming next in any case with mate in the next few moves. For instance after 34...♘d7 35.f7 with the threat of ♕g8 ♖xg8 fxg8=♕ mate! 35...♖fxf7 (*35...♖hxf7 36.♖h1*+-) 36.♕g8#

1–0

GAME 31
A. Moiseenko (2707)
Lu Shanglei (2546)
FIDE World Rapid 2014 Dubai UAE (8.36)
17.06.2014, [A80]
Annotated by Balogh Csaba

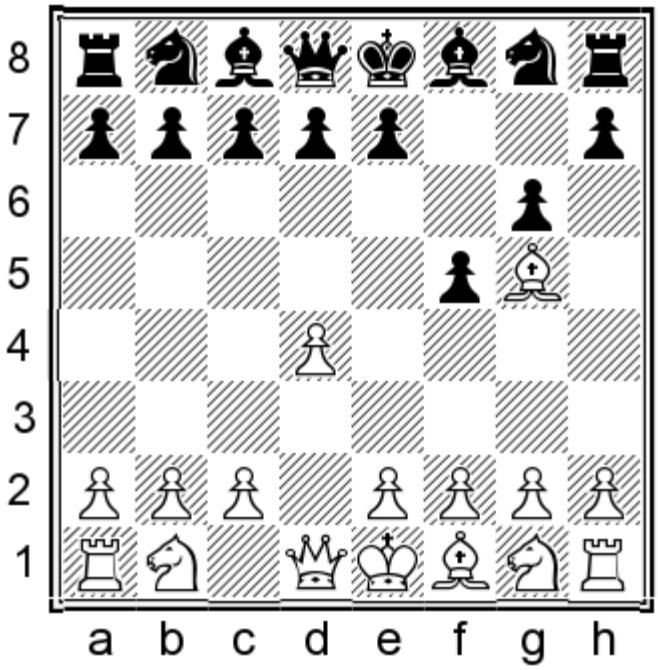
Let’s examine a very nice miniature with some unusual sacrifices.

1.d4 f5 2.♗g5

A very rare move with the idea to confuse the development of the black pieces a bit. White pins the e-pawn to the queen and he prepares to create doubled pawns in case of ♘f6.

2...g6

A standard development in the Dutch Defence.



2...h6 is positionally wrong because after 3.♗d2 the weakness in the black pawnchain (h7-g6-f5) will cause longterm problems for Black.

3.♘c3

The whole idea of the white concept is a quick development of the pieces and to launch an attack with either h4-h5, or with e4 opening the center in front of the king.

3...♘f6

Black was clearly not familiar with this opening and he makes a dubious move. 3...♗g7 is more natural and also the main line, where White has two choices: 4.e4 (Or *4.h4*) 4...fxe4 5.♘xe4 Actually Moiseenko has recently tried both options and both lines lead to very original positions.

4.h4!

4.♗xf6 is premature, because after 4...exf6 5.e3 Black can lock the center with 5...d5! If White could have developed his bishop to c4, he might have hoped for an advantage, but now Black is fine; the doubled pawns are not bad at all as they control all the important central squares.

4...h6

Another inaccuracy as Black critically weakens his g6 pawn and damages his own pawn structure. Black wanted to prevent 4...♗g7 5.h5! with the idea of a nice exchange sacrifice after 5...♘xh5 6.e4! It is better to include this move first to open the position on the king and only after 6...fxe4 7.♖xh5! gxh5 8.♕xh5+ ♔f8 9.♘d5! ♘c6 10.♗c4→ The attack looks very dangerous around the f7 square, which cannot be neutralized with ♕e8, because after the trade of the queens, c7 and a8 fall.

5.♗xf6 exf6 6.♘h3!

White immediately points out the drawback of the h6 move and drives his knight to the f4 outpost to attack the weakness on g6.

6...h5

Logical, but too slow. Black wanted to avoid the demolition of his kingside pawn structure with ♘f4 and h5. 6...♗b4 should have been played, although White has a clear advantage here as well. 7.♘f4 ♔f7 8.h5 (*8.♕d3* is also good.) 8...g5 9.♘fd5 ♗xc3+ 10.♘xc3 and the f5 pawn becomes a long-term target, which could be attacked effectively with e3, ♗d3 and ♕f3.

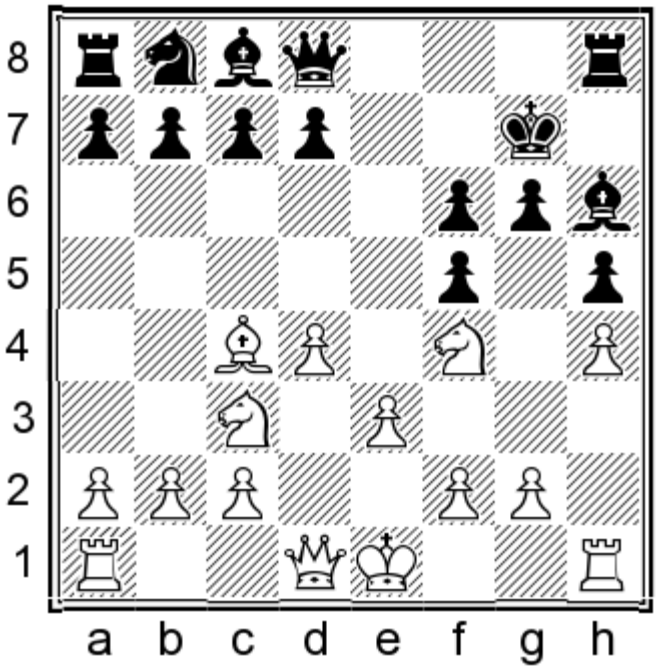
7.♘f4 ♔f7 8.e3

The bishop is coming to c4 with tempo.

8...♗h6

Another logical move to get rid of the strong knight, but it is already the decisive mistake. The refutation is quite nice. 8...c6 would have been principled, to lock the center again with d5, but White retains a big advantage with the strong 9.d5! preventing Black from building up his ideal formation. ♗c4 is coming next.

9.♗c4+ ♔g7



10.♘xg6!

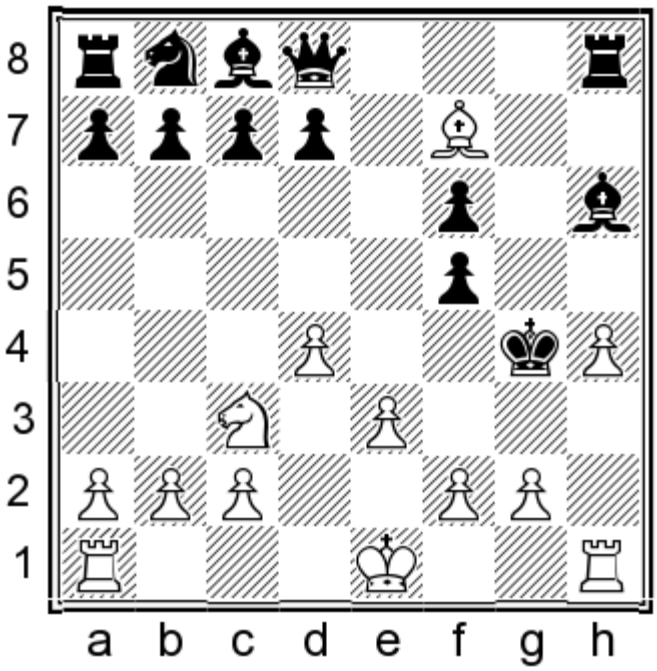
This is the momentum that White had to use. Moiseenko manages to punish his opponent for his mistakes in the opening.

10...♔xg6 11.♕xh5+!!

This beautiful queen sacrifice is the point!

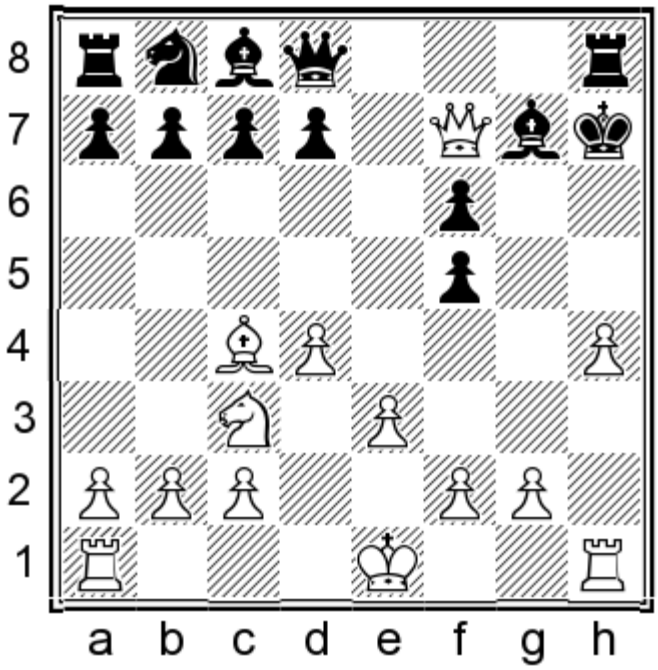
11...♔h7

11...♔xh5 leads to mate after 12.♗f7+! ♔g4



13.♘e2 (Or *13.f3+ ♔g3 14.♔f1!* and ♘e2 or ♖h3 mates next move.) White is threatening mate in one with f3, the only move to delay it is 13...f4 but now 14.f3+ ♔f5 15.e4# is quite nice.

12.♕f7+ ♗g7



13.♘d5!

White is a piece down, but his attack is crushing! The ♘d5 move was a very important attacking move to prevent Black's main defensive resources with ♕e8 or ♕f8, as both now lose to ♘xf6!

13...♖f8

13...♕f8 14.♘xf6+ ♔h6 15.♕h5#

13...d6 14.h5+- and h6 or ♕g6 wins next.

13...c6 also loses to 14.h5! cxd5 15.♕g6+ ♔g8 16.♗xd5+ ♔f8 17.♕f7#

14.♕h5+ ♗h6 15.♕xf5+ ♔h8

15...♔g7 does not change anything. White wins for instance after 16.h5 with the threat of ♕g6. Or 16.♖h3 is also strong enough to bring another attacker to the battle... 16...♕e8 17.♘xc7+-

16.♕g6!

The bishop is trapped on h6, the game is over!

16...♗g7 17.♕h5+

Black resigned in view of 17.♕h5+ ♔g8 18.♘e7# Theory is very well developed nowadays and we can rarely meet such 11.♕xh5 sacrifices in grandmaster games at such an early stage of the game.

1–0

GAME 32
R. Panjwani (2440)
W. So (2744)
9th Edmonton Int 2014 Edmonton CAN (3.2)
23.06.2014, [A09]
Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

We will now see a very crazy game and further proof of how well Wesley So is ‚feeling' in tactical positions.

1.♘f3 d5 2.c4

For quite some time White has stopped playing this move order and we will see one more time why.

2...d4!

Exactly the right reply. Black is taking over the center.

3.b4

This could be the preparation of Panjwani, but this line is considered to be bad for White. In the line 3.e3 ♘c6 4.exd4 ♘xd4 5.♘xd4 ♕xd4 6.♘c3 c6 7.d3 Black has the excellent move 7...♘h6! and of course Black is not afraid of ♗xh6 and otherwise the black knight is going to d4 over f5, with a nice position.

3...f6!

Another good move. Black wants to play e5 next, with simply a better position.

4.e3

White needs to do something and to do it as quickly as possible.

4...e5 5.c5

We are only on move 5 and the game is already very sharp. Of course not 5.exd4 e4 and Black is much better.

5...a5

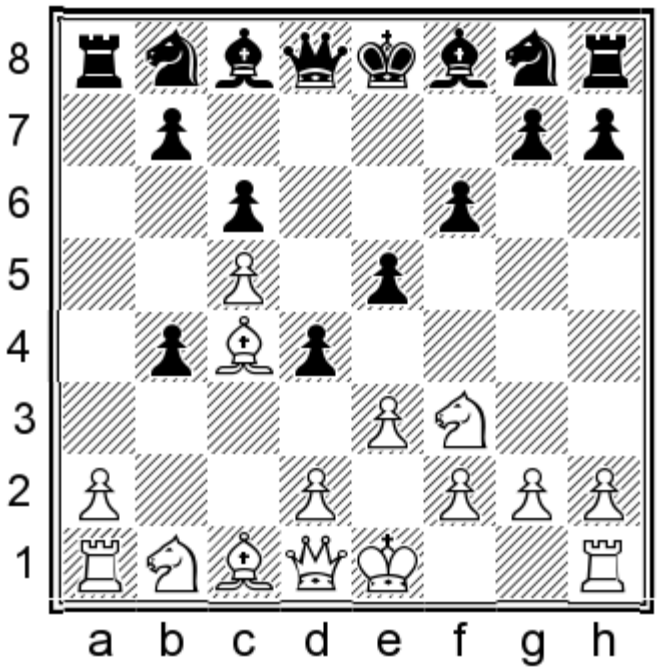
Of course. Black is trying to crush White's pawn structure and from now on things start to be pretty forced.

6.♗b5+

This move is hard to understand, but it seems like preparation. Why White is trying to provoke the c6 move from Black is difficult for me to understand. Maybe to avoid ♘c6 in some lines, but it is only speculation.

6...c6 7.♗c4 axb4

Black tries the most principled move.



I think that after 7...dxe3 8.fxe3 e4 9.♘d4 axb4 Black's position should be better.

8.♘xe5

Let the fun begin! 8.exd4 exd4 followed by ♗xc5 and Black's position is clearly better.]

8...fxe5

We have a very strange position. It is funny to see that the first 8 moves of Black were only with pawns. 8...♘h6 9.♘d3 ♗f5 and probably Black has at least equalized.

9.♕h5+ g6

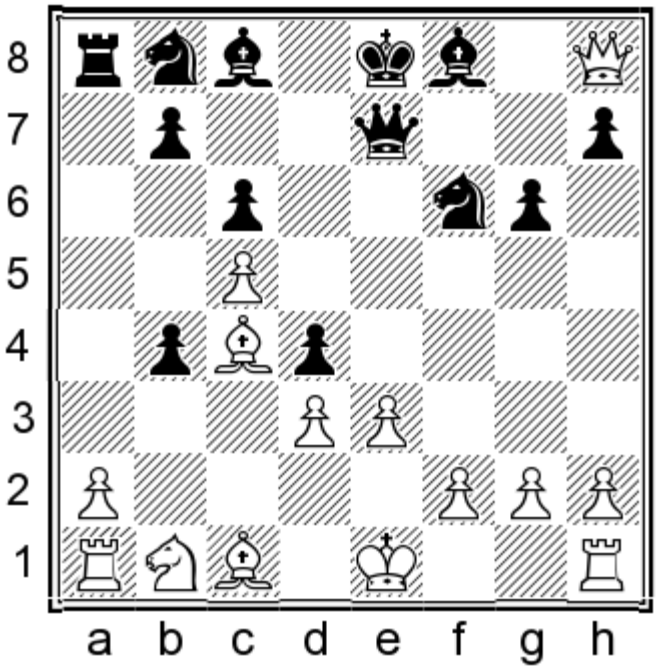
9...♔d7? would, of course, be a mistake since after 10.♕f5+ ♔c7 11.♕xe5+ White would be winning.

10.♕xe5+ ♕e7 11.♕xh8 ♘f6

White is an exchange up, but the queen is trapped on h8. Also the positions of the bishop on c1, knight on b1 and rook a1 are anything but great. The game is very dynamic though.

12.d3

A logical move. White wants to play ♘d2 next and develop his pieces, but the question is why not play ♗b2 with the threat of playing ♗xd4?



The simple 12.♗b2 looks just killing, but Black also has an excellent reply: 12...♗e6!! Nobody cares about the d4 pawn! (*12...♘bd7 13.♗xd4 ♘e5 14.0-0* and White is just winning.)

13.♗xd4 ♘bd7 14.♗xe6 ♕xe6 followed by 0-0-0 and ♗h6. The white queen is trapped on h8 and is going to be captured.

12...♗e6!

A strong move. The idea of Black is ♘bd7 and 0-0-0.

13.♘d2

In case of 13.♗xe6 ♕xe6 14.♗b2 ♘bd7 15.♗xd4 0-0-0 followed by ♗h6, Black is better.

13...♘bd7 14.a3

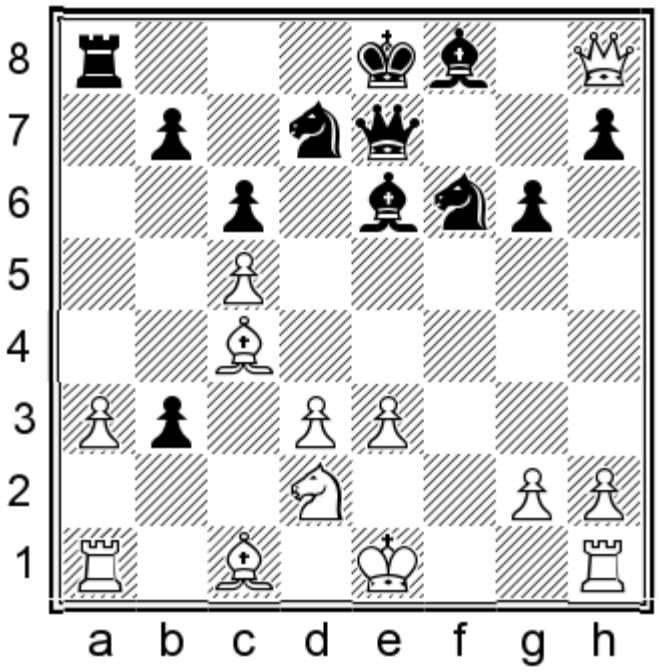
White is trying to open the a-file, to have axb4 after Black's 0-0-0.

14...dxe3

A logical move. With the queen still trapped on h8, Black is trying to open the position as much as possible to gain some attacking chances. Another very interesting position would appear after 14...♘e5. 15.♘e4 is probably White's best reply, then 15...♘xe4 16.♕xe5 ♗xc4. The strange thing is that although we are entering an endgame now, and White is an exchange up, the black pieces are so nicely placed that probably Black's chances are even better. 17.♕xe7+ ♗xe7 18.dxc4 d3 and I would rather be Black here.

15.fxe3 b3!

What a great move by So! Black is not only getting a very strong pawn on b3 now, but also wants to play 0-0-0 and ♗h6.



16.♘e4?

And finally White makes a mistake. It’s really not an easy task for White to find a good reply here, but let’s take a look at one of the most logical moves possible: 16.0-0 0-0-0 Now it is clear that White will not be able to save the queen on h8, but at least it would be good to get as much material as possible. 17.♗b2 ♗f5! This is the key move, ♕xe3 and ♗h6 or ♗g7 are the threats now. 18.e4 (*18.♘e4* didn’t help: *18...♗g7 19.♕xg7 ♕xg7 20.♘xf6 ♘xc5* With a winning position for Black.) 18...♗h6 19.♗xf6 ♘xf6 20.♕xf6 ♕xf6 21.♘xb3 ♕e5 And although things are far from clear, Black’s material advantage should be enough to give him better play.

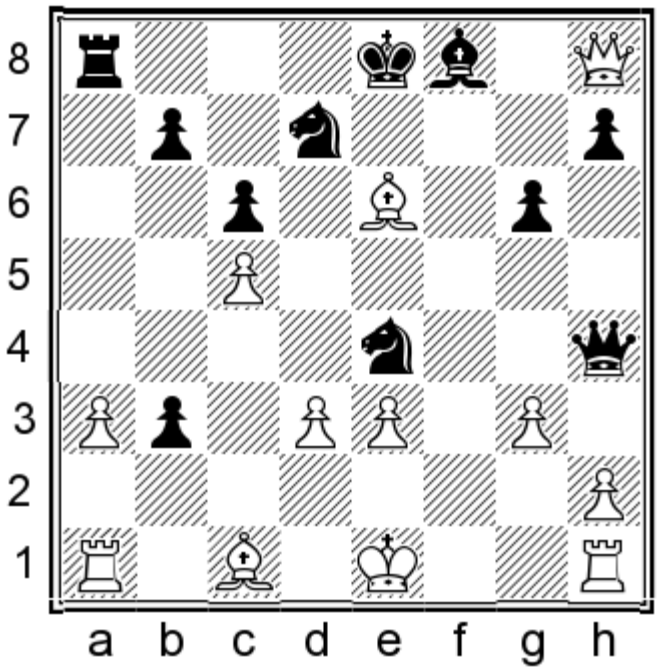
16...♘xe4!

So doesn’t miss his chance and calculates the complications perfectly!

17.♗xe6 ♕h4+

Could it be that White missed this unpleasant check?!

18.g3



18.♔e2 was losing immediately. 18...♕f2+ 19.♔d1 ♘df6 With mate to follow very shortly.

18...♘xg3 19.♖g1

19.♗xd7+ was also losing. 19...♔xd7 20.hxg3 ♕xh1+ 21.♔f2 The material situation is equal now, but it is clear that the white king is much weaker than his colleague. 21...♖d8! A nice finishing move. Black wants to play ♔c8 next, bringing all his pieces to the attack. The game is basically over.

19...♘e4+

It is pleasant to see how perfectly the black pieces are dominating the game.

20.♔d1 ♘dxc5

and another Black piece is entering the attack with a tempo.

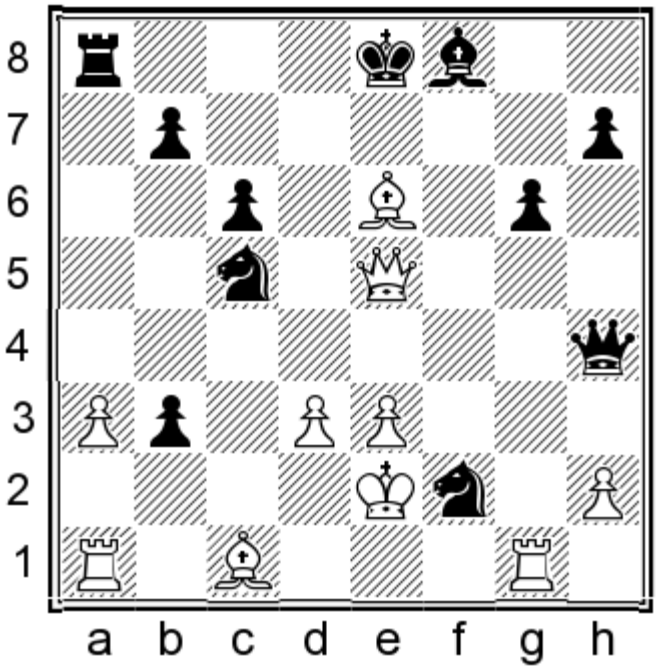
21.♕e5

After 21.dxe4 ♕xh2 Black is mating with the upcoming ♖d8.

21...♘f2+

Now Black is winning another pawn on d3 with tempo.

22.♔e2



22...♘fxd3

Black has at least 100 deadly threats. What a powerful game by Wesley So!

23.♕d4 ♕f2+

A great end to a fantastic game. I guess not many players would like to repeat the current opening anymore after seeing such a crush.

0–1

GAME 33
P. Svidler (2751)
B. Gelfand (2753)
Gelfand-Svidler Rapid 2014 Jerusalem ISR (5)
23.07.2014, [D81]
Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

In a very interesting rapid match out of 8 games Svidler managed to defeat Gelfand with a score of 5-3, but as we will see in the current game, Gelfand also had his moments in the match. After the opening, the position quickly became very sharp and then Gelfand completely crushed the defence lines of the 7-times Russian Champion with very active and powerful play.

1.c4 g6

The move order does not really matter for the current game, soon we will be in the Gruenfeld.

2.d4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 d5

Gelfand continues with his favourite opening for the past few years, with which he was very successful in his match

against Anand for the WC title. The Gruenfeld has also been the main opening of Svidler for at least the last 10 years. The strange thing in chess is that sometimes it is really hard to play against your own main repertoire...

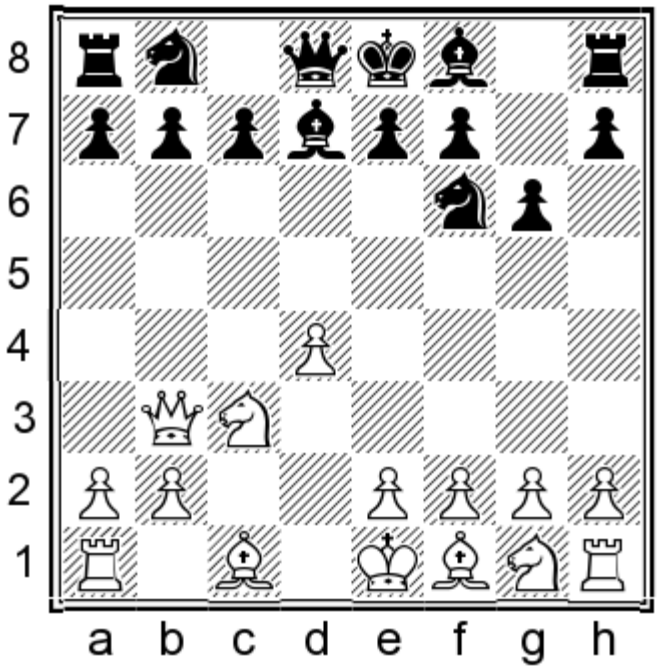
4.♕b3

This is not the main move, but it is of course nothing new either.

4...dxc4

As usual Black immediately starts his play against the white center.

5.♕xc4 ♗e6 6.♕b5+ ♗d7 7.♕b3



Grabbing the pawn is very dangerous for White: 7.♕xb7 ♘c6! The pawn on d4 is hanging, which gives Black enough time to secure great play. 8.e3 ♖b8 9.♕a6 ♘b4 10.♕e2 c5! Such positions are extremely usual for the Gruenfeld...who cares about pawns when all the black pieces will be in the game? White's position is already very dangerous.

7...c5!

Of course this is still theory, but it is a great move anyway. Black doesn't waste any time and is looking for active play.

8.d5

8.dxc5 is the other possible move which leads to more or less equal play.

8...b5!

Another strong move by Black. Of course in case White has enough time to play e4, and develop the pieces to castle kingside, Black's position would be pretty poor.

9.♘xb5 ♕a5+ 10.♘c3 ♘a6

A move with multiple ideas. Of course the simple ♖b8 can be strong, especially with the idea of ♗g7 and putting

pressure on the b2 pawn, but we will also soon see the other move which Gelfand had in mind.

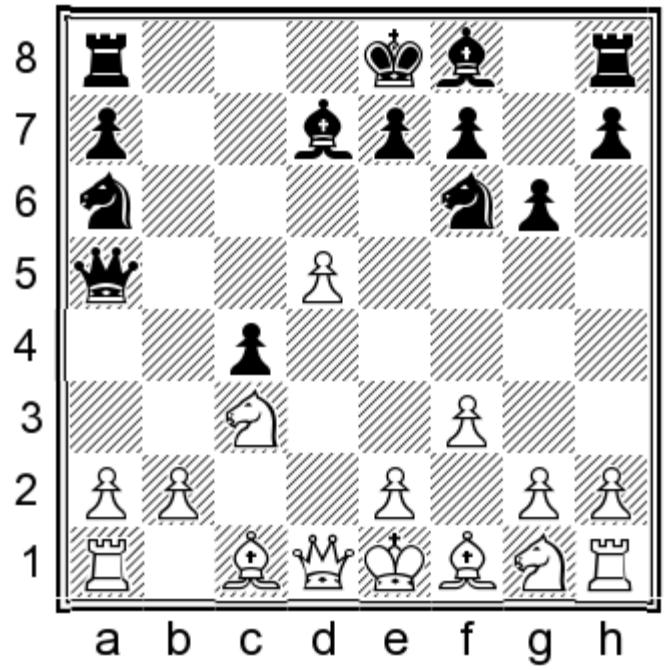
11.f3

White is preparing the e4 push. In case of 11.e4 it seems like Black has the strong 11...c4! The black knight wants to take up a great position on c5. 12.♕a3 It is dangerous for White to keep the queens on. (*12.♕xc4 ♘b4* and Black's play is very dangerous again.) 12...♕xa3 13.bxa3 ♘c5 14.e5 ♘g4 with big complications.

11...c4

This was the second idea behind 10...♘a6. For White it is usually too dangerous to take the pawn on c4 and the black knight is getting the excellent c5 square.

12.♕d1



12.♕xc4 didn't work: 12...♘b4 ♘c2 is a serious threat. 13.♕b3 ♖b8 ♘d2 is the next threat. which gives Black clearly more than just compensation for the 2 pawns.

12...e6!?

Black continues playing very dynamically. Naturally, a move like 12...♗g7 was possible, but maybe after 13.e4 White could keep some advantage. Right now the game is becoming completely messy.

13.e4

Playing 13.dxe6 is not an option because of 13...♗xe6 followed by ♖d8.

13...exd5 14.e5?

And this looks like a clear miscalculation by Svidler. 14.exd5 would lead to a very unclear position and now Black has a lot of different ways to continue, maybe even 14...0-0-0 could be an option! 14...♗c5 15.♗xc4 0-0 16.♘ge2 ♖ab8 Black is 2 pawns down, but the white king is still in the center. It is really hard to say who is better here. Maybe White is able to keep things together, but it might also be that Black is doing perfectly fine here. A very interesting position...

14...d4!

This is the move that Svidler clearly under-estimated. What to do now for White?!

15.exf6

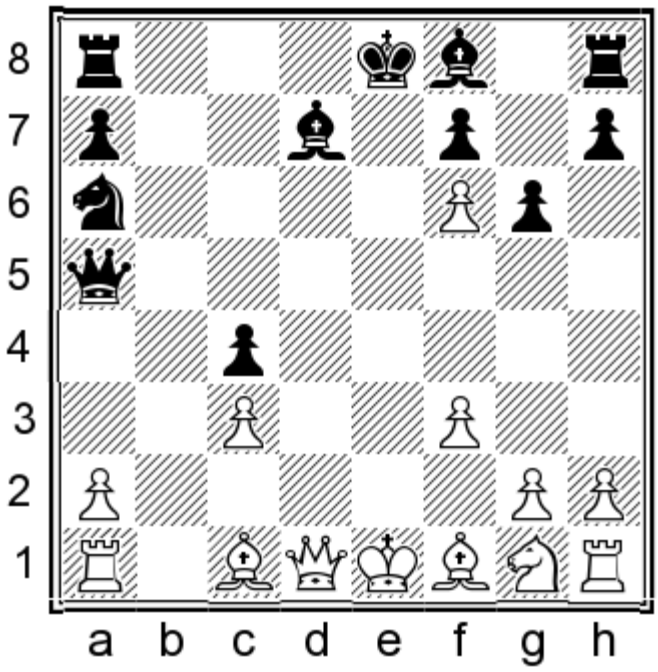
No better is 15.♕xd4 ♘b4 and White has no good defence against ♘c2 next. 16.♕d1 ♕xe5+ with a mating attack for Black.

15...dxc3

We have a funny position; many of the black pieces are out, while ALL of White's pieces are still placed on their starting positions! This just can't go well!

16.bxc3

How to mate the white king now?



16...0-0-0!?

Oh yes, Gelfand is on a rush! Black also had other nice moves like 16...♗c5 or just 16...♘c5, but clearly 16...0-0-0 looks like the most beautiful move!

17.♗d2

It is hard for White to find a better defence.

17...♗a4

Before starting the final attack, Black forces the white queen to a very passive position on c1 and at the same time opening the d-file for the rook.

18.♕c1

18.♕e2 ♖e8 and the game is over.

18...♕e5+

Once again Black picks the best move. Before playing ♘c5 Gelfand places his queen on the best central square possible.

19.♗e2

Trying to escape with the king to f1 to avoid getting mated immediately...

19...♘c5

What domination by the black pieces!

20.♔f1

It is clear that Black has “almost” won the game, but still White is sort of fighting. His idea could be to play ♘h3-♘f2.

20...♘d3!

The final important move of the game. Usually the exchange of pieces is not the best way in the case of an attack, but this time it is a perfectly correct decision. The bishop on e2 holds things together and the black rook will take up a great position on d2, while the bishop from f8 is going to c5.

21.♗xd3 ♖xd3 22.♘e2

22.♕e1 ♕f5 with similar ideas as in the game.

22...♗c5

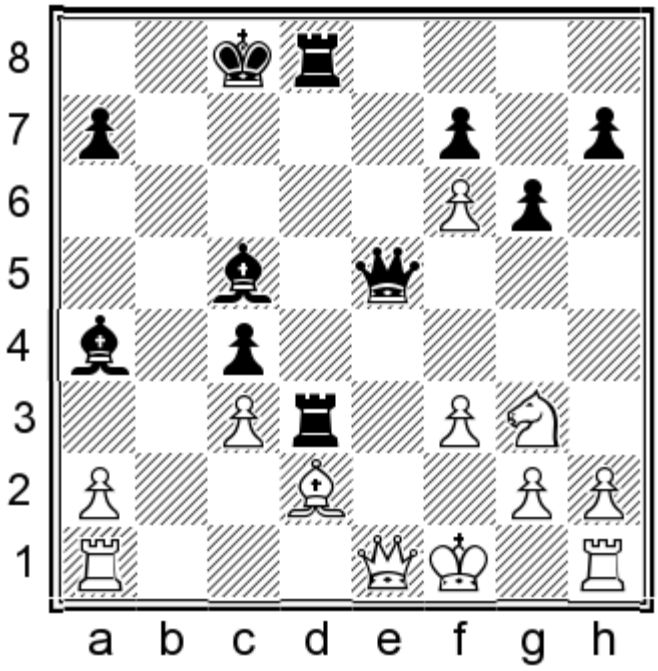
Black’s pressure will soon explode into a nice mating net around the white king.

23.♘g3 ♖hd8

The last black piece is in the game — just fantastic!

24.♕e1

Svidler tries to exchange queens...



24...♗e3

But of course there is no escape from Black's attack!

25.♗xe3 ♖xe3

It was just too much for Peter... Now on 26.♕f2 the simple 26...♕xc3 is winning. What a powerful game by Boris Gelfand, who is already a chess old-timer and one of the few players who is able to keep up a great chess level despite being over 40.

0–1

GAME 34
A. Shirov (2709)
S. Sulskis (2544)
41st Olympiad Open 2014 Tromso NOR (2.36)
03.08.2014, [C57]
Annotated by Balogh Csaba

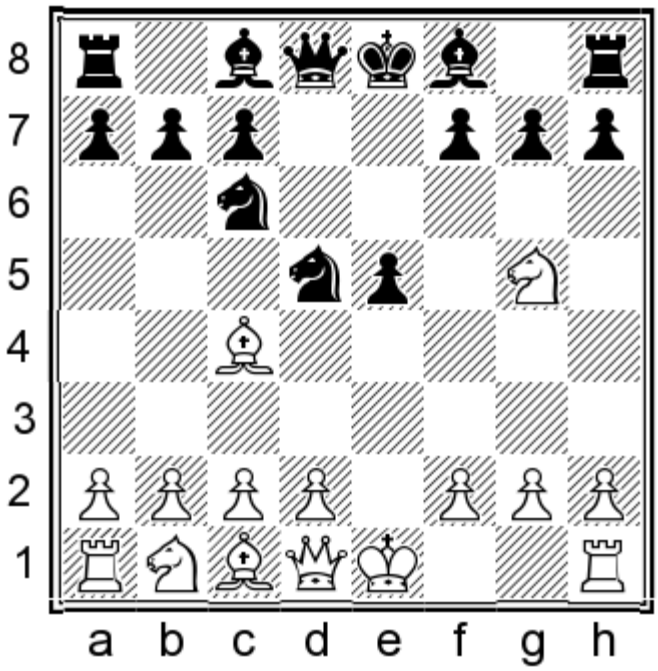
Shirov managed to show again what he enjoys the most in chess, winning a great attacking game.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♘f6 4.♘g5

A well known line, which leads to huge complications. The Italian opening starts with 4.d3 and leads to more solid positions.

4...d5 5.exd5 ♘xd5?

A brave decision! This practically invites White to sacrifice a piece for a huge attack. Of course, one should not ask Shirov twice to go for it...



The classic main line goes with 5...♘a5 6.♗b5+ c6 7.dxc6 bxc6 8.♗e2 h6 with an extra pawn for White, but his pieces end up misplaced, which gives Black strong compensation for it.

6.♘xf7!

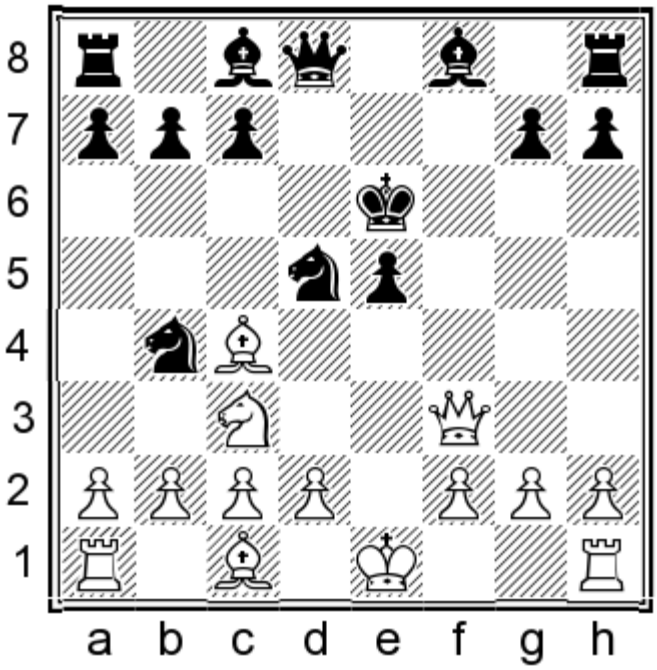
This sacrifice has been played in more than a thousand games. The king is forced to move into the center, where White can quickly develop an attack against it, based on the pin of the c4 bishop. On the other hand, Black takes a piece and if he manages to consolidate he is probably going to win the game.

6...♔xf7 7.♕f3+ ♔e6 8.♘c3!

Developing with tempo and putting further pressure on the main target on d5.

8...♘cb4

We are still following hundreds of games. Black not only defends the d5, but also counterattacks the c2 pawn and intends to strengthen his d5 knight with c6!



The alternative is 8...♘ce7 which is strongly met by 9.d4! opening the center. White intends to pin the other knight with ♗g5, followed by queenside castling with a very dangerous attack. How to continue now with White?

9.a3!!

Another great sacrifice based on excellent intuition. White gives his useless a1 rook for the d5 knight before Black can play c6. This move is justified even materially, because White only gives up an exchange, but the knight is going to be trapped on a1.

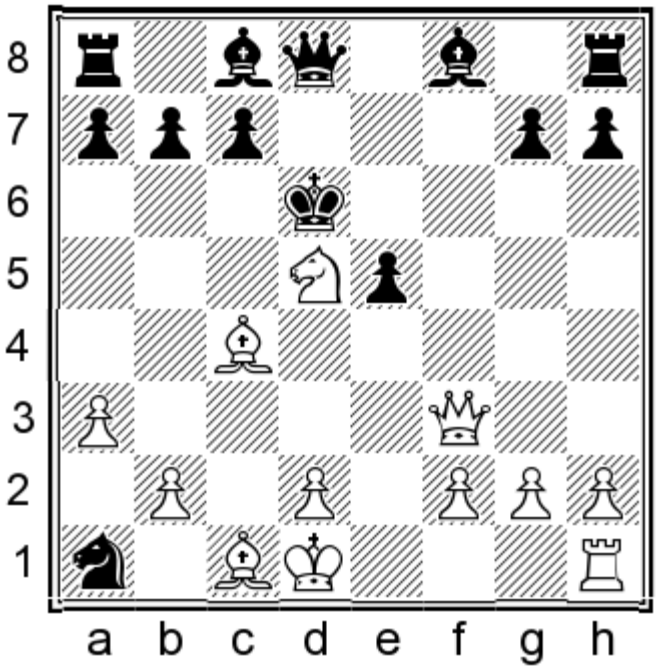
9...♘xc2+

Black has no choice, he must accept the gift.

10.♔d1 ♘xa1 11.♘xd5!

Creating a deadly pin and bringing in a new attacker is more important than giving a check. 11.♗xd5+ ♔d7 followed by c6 and ♔c7 is fine for Black. 12.♕g4+ ♔d6

11...♔d6



12.d4!!

Excellent and highly-principled play! White opens the center in front of the king. With this move he wants to bring his last two unemployed pieces into the game; the rook could quickly come to e1, while the bishop might appear on f4!

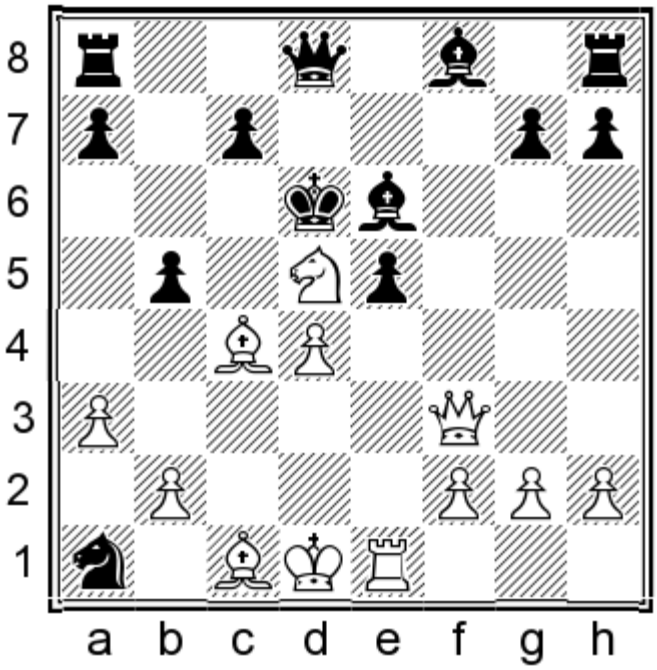
12...♗e6

Black tries to ensure a path for the king back to c8.

13.♖e1!

White must play the most energetic moves, otherwise his rook down is going to tell. 13.dxe5+? ♔d7

13...b5



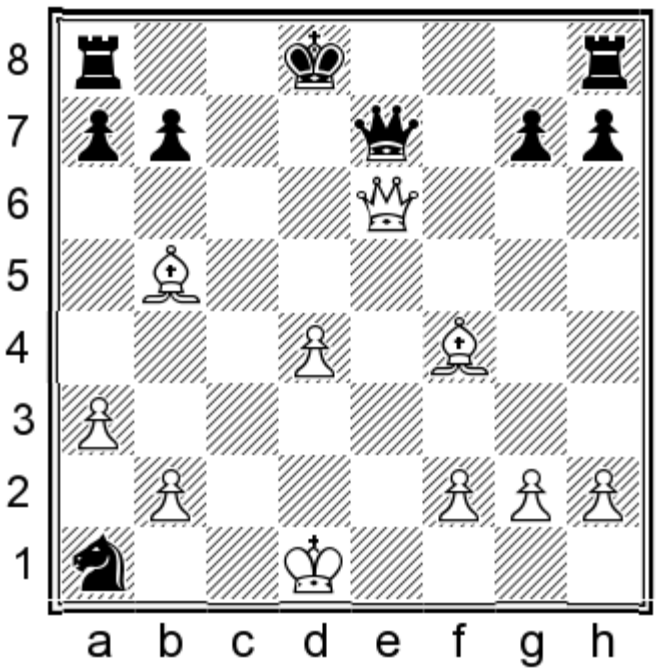
Other moves lead to beautiful mates as well. For instance after 13...c6 14.♖xe5! cxd5

(*14...♗xd5 15.♖xd5+* is the same as 14...cxd5.)

15.♖xd5+! ♗xd5 16.♕xd5+ and the queen cooperating with the pair of bishops successfully hunts down the black king... 16...♔c7 17.♗f4+ ♗d6

(*17...♔c8* loses to *18.♕f5+! ♕d7 19.♗e6+-; 17...♔b6 18.♕b5#*)

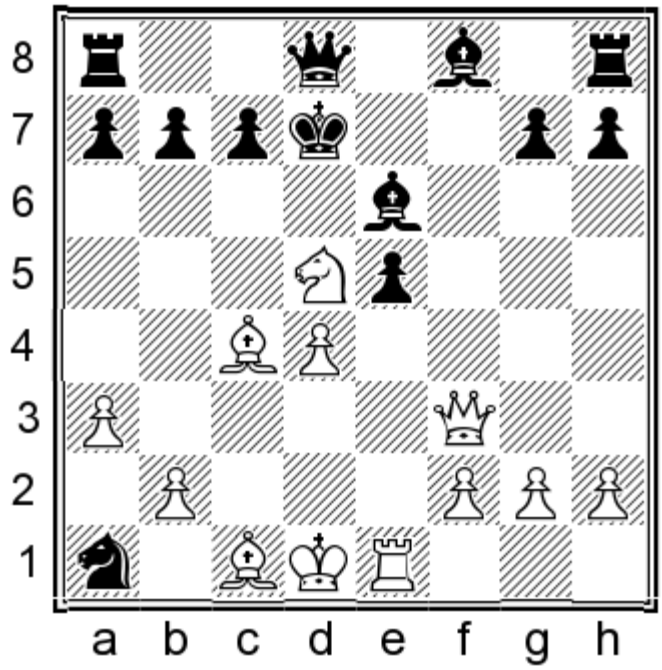
18.♕c5+! ♔d7 19.♕xd6+ ♔e8 20.♕e6+ ♕e7 21.♗b5+ ♔d8



(*21...♔f8 22.♗d6+-*)

22.♗g5! ♕xg5 23.♕d7# We can be sure that Shirov would have finished the game like this if his opponent had chosen 13... c6.;

13...♔d7 loses to the brilliant



14.♘b6+!! It is very important to keep the king in the center and not allow it to c8-b8. 14...axb6 15.♗xe6+ ♔xe6 16.♖xe5+ ♔d7 17.♕f5+! All checks are based on preventing ♔c8 and meanwhile it is going to lead to mate. 17...♔c6 18.d5+ ♔b5 19.♕d3++- and mate is coming soon.

14.♘b4!

Another spectacular move, which leads to a technically won position. However, it was even stronger to play 14.♖xe5!! bxc4 15.♘f4! and Black is helpless against the threats... 15...♗f7

(*15...♔d7 16.♘xe6 ♕f6 17.♕d5+ ♗d6 18.♘c5+ ♔d8 19.♕xa8#*)

16.♖d5+! is the point! 16...♗xd5 17.♕xd5+ ♔e7 18.♕e6#

14...bxc4

On 14...♗xc4 15.♖xe5! is the most precise, ♕c6 is threatened with mate 15...♕d7 16.♗f4+- and it's over.

15.♕c6+ ♔e7 16.♗g5+ ♔f7 17.♗xd8 ♖xd8 18.♕xc7+ ♖d7 19.♕xe5+-

Lets stop to count the material. Black has two bishops and a rook for the queen and two pawns, which could be unclear, but the right evaluation of the position is not in question because the black pieces are undeveloped and misplaced.

19...♖d6 20.d5!

But, of course, Shirov continues playing the most straightforward moves to not give any breathing space to his opponent!

20...♗d7 21.♕f4+

21.♖e4+- was also winning.

21...♔g8 22.♕xc4

White eliminates the c4 pawn in order to trap the knight on a1, since it has lost its escape square on b3.

22...a5

22...♗a4+ 23.♔d2 ♘b3+ does not change anything. The knight is still trapped after 24.♔c3 ♘a5 25.♕c7+-

23.♘d3 a4

Trying to rescue the knight, but of course it is too slow.

24.♘c5

Threatening to chase away the d6 rook with ♘xd7, ♘e4 or ♘b7 and then d6 check is coming with mate.

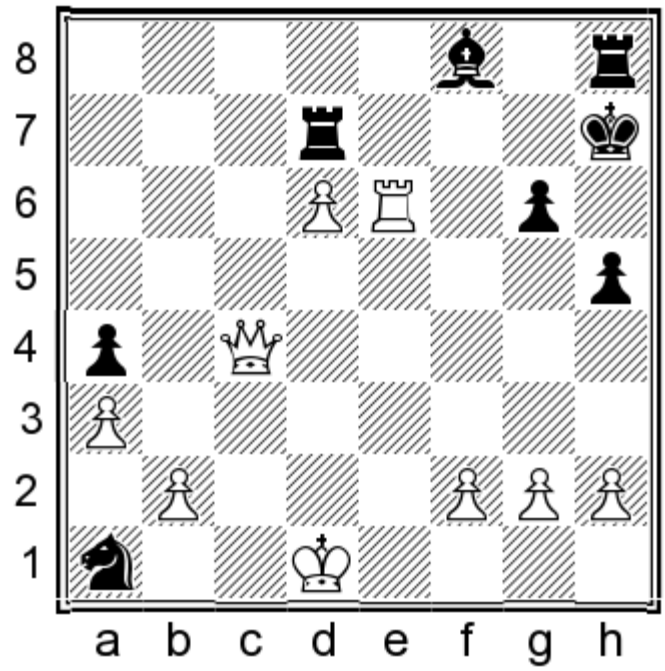
24...h5

Trying to give some luft to the king.

25.♘xd7 ♖xd7 26.d6+ ♔h7 27.♖e6!

Total domination!

27...g6



On 27...♘b3 the easiest is 28.♕xa4 ♘c5 29.♕c2++- winning the knight and the game.

28.♖xg6!

Finishing the game in style! Black resigned in view of 28.♖xg6 ♔xg6 29.♕e6+ ♔g5

(*29...♔g7 30.♕xd7++-*)

30.f4+! ♔xf4 31.g3+ ♔f3

(*31...♔g5 32.h4#*)

32.♕e2# Well, we must admit that it is a bit risky to play such an opening against Shirov — or at least we should not be surprised to end up losing like this!

1–0

GAME 35
B. Gelfand (2753)
F. Amonatov (2590)
41st Olympiad Open 2014 Tromso NOR (2.10)
03.08.2014, [E94]
Annotated by Balogh Csaba

A fantastic game, which shows how important preparation is in today's chess. Gelfand practically wins this game without making a single move by himself. The only difficult thing was to recall the home analyzis.

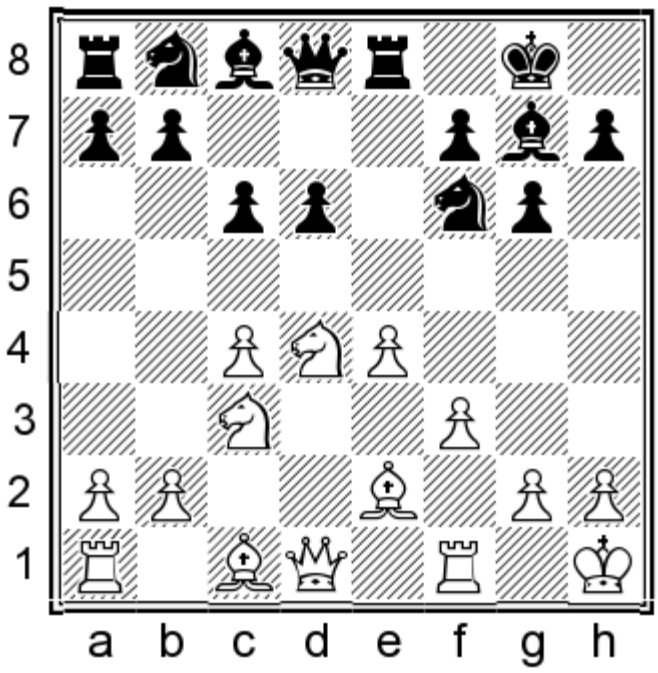
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0-0

Amonatov is considered to be a King's Indian expert, but this time he chooses the wrong line in it.

6.♗e2 e5 7.0-0 exd4

This is already a bit dubious, the main line starts with 7...♘c6.

8.♘xd4 ♖e8 9.f3 c6 10.♔h1



10...♘h5

This concrete line was played recently by the biggest King's Indian experts, such as Radjabov, Grischuk and Topalov, but the latest developments of theory show that Black faces big problems here. Black is threatening ♕h4 followed by ♘g3 or ♕e5. Without knowing anything about this from the white side, this could be very dangerous. However Gelfand

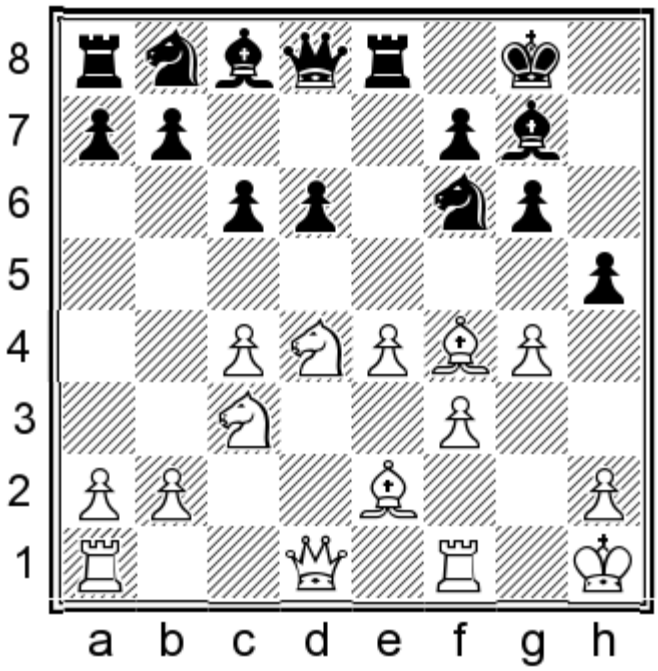
shows us all the details...

11.g4! ♘f6 12.♗f4

Black has been pushed back and White intends to put big pressure on the backward d6 pawn with ♕d2 and ♖ad1. The only critical move was considered to be

12...h5

with the idea to make use of the g4 weakening and trying to change the structure in Black's favor.



13.♘f5!!

This has already been played in several games and it seems to refute the entire idea of Black! Black is forced to accept the sacrifice, otherwise White simply takes on d6 with the knight, but then the attack on the open g-file appears to be crushing. Inprevious games, White mainly played 13.g5 ♘h7 14.♕d2 ♘d7 with a very complicated game.

13...gxf5 14.gxf5 d5

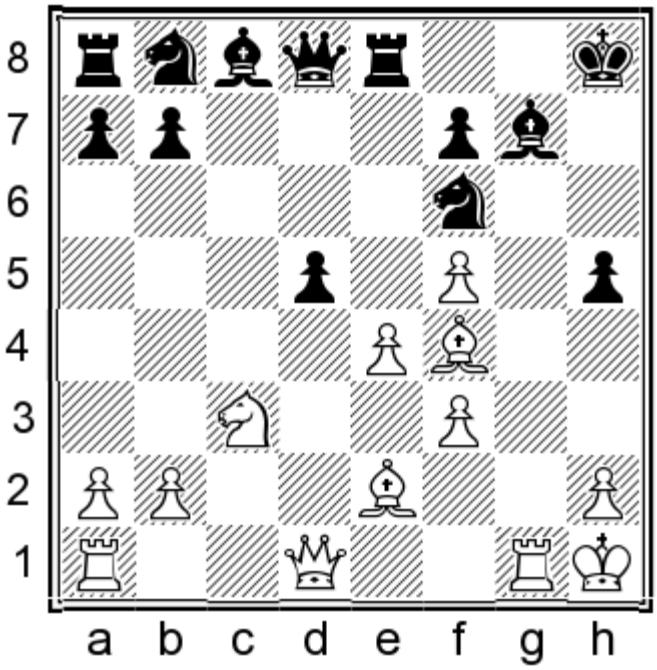
The most principled reaction. Against a flank attack, one must search for counterplay and open the center! Arkadij has commented on the Shomoev-Ganguly game in a previous issue of our newsletter, which continued with 14...♘bd7 15.♖g1 ♔h8 16.♕e1 ♘e5 17.♕h4 and White won later with another brilliant mating attack.

15.cxd5 cxd5 16.♖g1!

This is the novelty and it seems to be crushing. Last year, the Kasimdzhanov-Topalov game had seen the continuation of 16.e5 ♗xf5 17.exf6 ♕xf6 18.♘xd5 ♕xb2 with a very complicated game, which later finished in a draw.

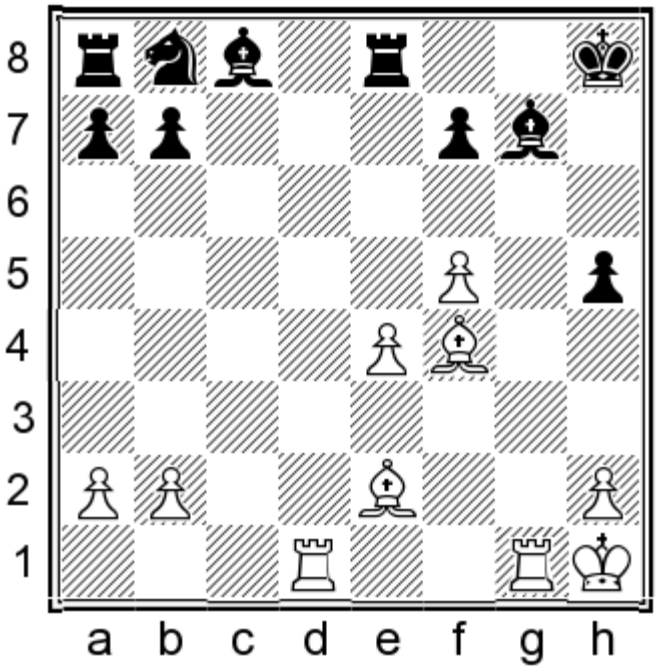
16...♔h8

Escaping from the pin and the direct threat of ♗h6.



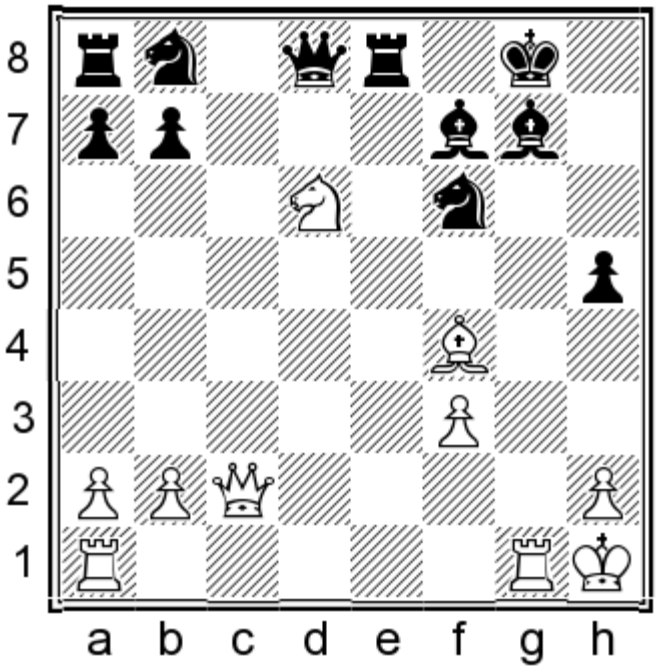
The alternative was 16...dxe4 which is strongly met by 17.♘xe4! Despite being able to trade queens, Black ends up in trouble in beautiful lines... 17...♕xd1 is objectively the best defense, but it also leads to a difficult position.

a) 17...♘xe4 18.fxe4 ♕xd1 19.♖axd1 White is still threatening ♗h6. 19...♔h8 seems to solve the problems, but here comes the unpleasant surprise.



20.f6! ♗xf6 21.♖d5! and suddenly Black misses his undeveloped pieces on the queenside to defend successfully. 21...♗g4 22.♗xg4 hxg4 23.♖xg4 ♗g7 The only way to avoid ♖h5 mate, but it also loses to 24.♖h5+ ♔g8 25.♖hg5+-;

b) 17...♗xf5 18.♘d6 ♗g6 looks very good to close the g-file, but it also fails to save the game if White finds the following nice attacking moves: 19.♗c4! Pinning the king creates the threat of ♖xg6. 19...♔h7 20.♗xf7! ♗xf7 21.♕c2+! ♔g8



22.♖xg7+!! There is no way back in such positions! On the other hand it is also possible to find such moves by logic, because White must eliminate the main defender of the king, but of course calculation plays the main role in this phase of the game... 22...♔xg7 23.♗h6+! ♔g8

(*23...♔xh6 24.♘xf7+ ♔g7 25.♘xd8+-*)

24.♕f5!+- and White is helpless against the mate with ♕g5 or ♖g1;

18.♘xf6+ ♔h8

(After *18...♔f8* White uses the motif which we had already seen in the 17... ♘xe4 line *19.♘h7+! ♔g8 20.♖axd1 ♔xh7 21.f6!* and the rook joins the attack along the 5th rank. *21...♗xf6 22.♖d5 ♗g4 23.♗d3+ ♔h8 24.fxg4+-*)

19.♖axd1 ♗xf6 20.♖d6! ♘d7 21.♗b5 White will end up with some extra material and he keeps on attacking.

17.♖xg7!!

Without preparation this is an extremely difficult move to make, because White has to foresee the very deep 21st move!

17...♔xg7 18.♕g1+ ♔h8

It is important to keep the h7 square free for the knight against the ♕g5-h6 threats, but it also has a drawback, that the king stands on a dark square in the perspective of the bishop. The next move points it out... 18...♔h7 19.♕g5+- is crushing as Black cannot play ♘h7.

19.♗g5! ♗xf5

Black is a full rook up and he tries to give back some material in order to quickly bring the a8 rook into the defense. I must admit, Amonatov defends resourcefully, but this time it does not help. Other moves were also losing: On 19...♖g8 20.♘xd5 ♘xd5 21.♗xd8 ♖xg1+ 22.♖xg1 ♘c6 23.♗h4 and White wins back the piece and gets a winning position, because if the d5 knight moves it leads to even bigger problems... 23...♘f4 24.♗f6+ ♔h7 25.♖g7+ ♔h6 26.♖g8+- and mate on h8.;

19...♘bd7 20.♘xd5+-;

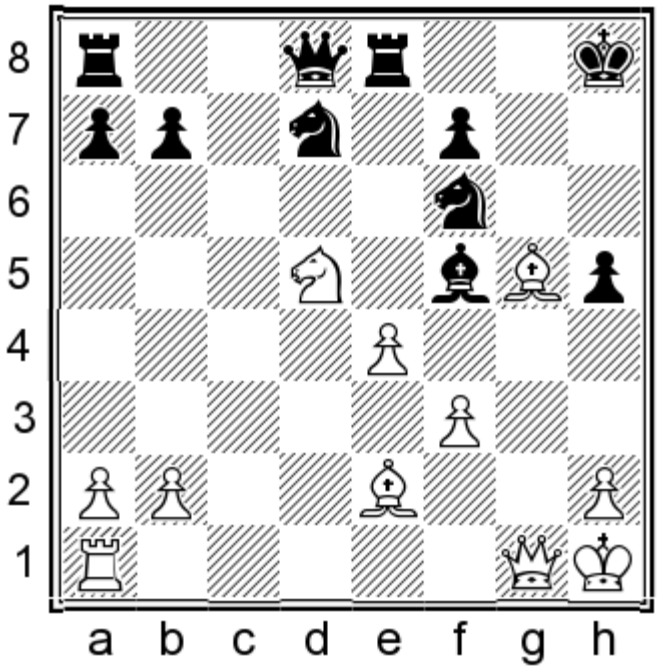
19...dxe4 20.♘d5! ♘bd7 21.♕d4!+- Beautiful co-operation of the white pieces. He focuses all his forces on the f6

knight and Black cannot hold it anymore and collapses.

20.♘xd5!

20.exf5 is too slow, 20...♘bd7 and Black could continue resisting with ♖c8-c6 or ♖g8 next move.

20...♘bd7



Black is still a rook up and he seems to consolidate finally, but the cold shower is just about to come:

21.♖d1!!

A silent attacking move which creates a deadly pin on the d-file. This destroys all the efforts of Black. It is interesting to mention that I was speaking to another top GM about this game, and he told me that he also knew about the 21.♖d1!! winning move, but Gelfand was the lucky one who managed to play it in a practical game. This is how the best players are prepared for the game and where current computer chess stands at the moment.

21...♖g8

Black had nothing better, but he ends up materially down and his king remains exposed.

22.♘xf6 ♖xg5 23.♕xg5 ♕xf6 24.♕xh5+ ♔g7

24...♗h7 25.♖xd7+- is also hopeless.

25.exf5

White has two extra pawns and he continues attacking. The rest is a matter of technique and Gelfand does not give any chances to his opponent.

25...♘b6

Black could not even centralize his knight 25...♘e5 is met by 26.f4! and the knight does not have a good place to go

26...♕c6+ 27.♔g1 ♕b6+ 28.♔f1 ♘c6 29.f6++- Black gets mated after ♕h6 next move.

26.♕g4+ ♔f8 27.♕b4+ ♕e7 28.♕c3!

Spectacular!

28...f6

28...♕xe2 loses to 29.♖e1!+- and ♕h8 mates next move!

29.♖g1 ♖c8 30.♕d2

Black resigned as there was no way to put up more resistance.

1–0

GAME 36
A. Grischuk (2789)
M. Rodshtein (2678)
ECC Open Bilbao ESP (3)
16.09.2014, [A07]
Annotated by Balogh Csaba

A very unusual and brilliant game was played by Grischuk.

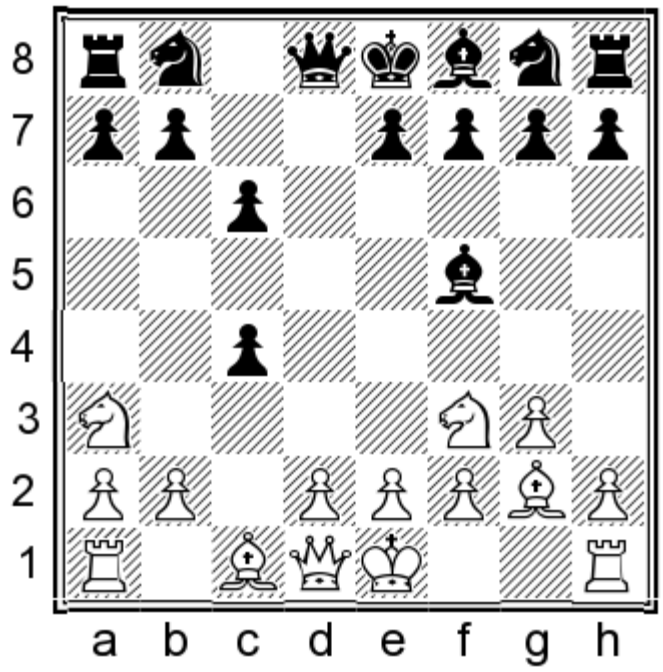
1.♘f3 d5 2.g3

Rodshtein is a very good theoretician, one of the main seconds of Gelfand and Aronian for a very long time now. Grischuk cleverly decides to lead the game towards less explored territories and he plays the Reti opening.

2...c6 3.♗g2 ♗f5 4.c4 dxc4

This is a new direction. Just a few games have been played so far, with excellent results for Black.

5.♘a3



This is the way White attempts to regain the material, and the trade should be in his favor as Black has given up his strong center. However, there is a tactical point behind 4...dxc4.

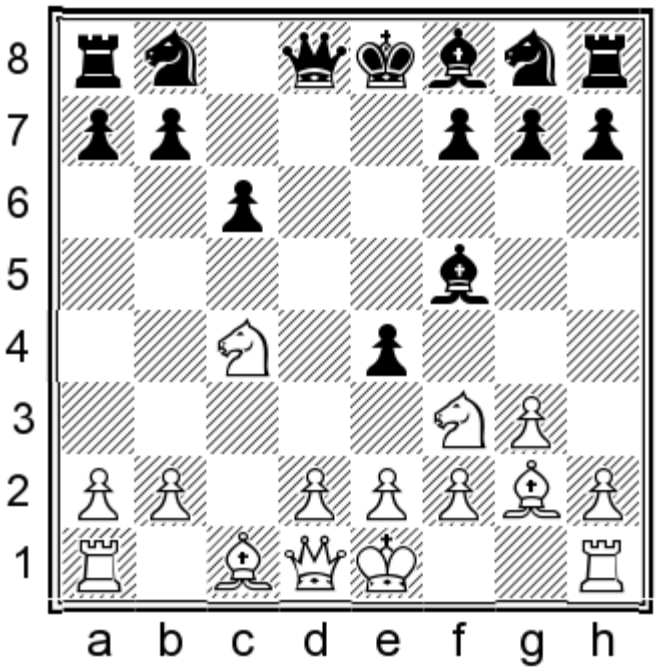
5...e5!?

Black wants to build a different kind of strong center.

6.♘xc4

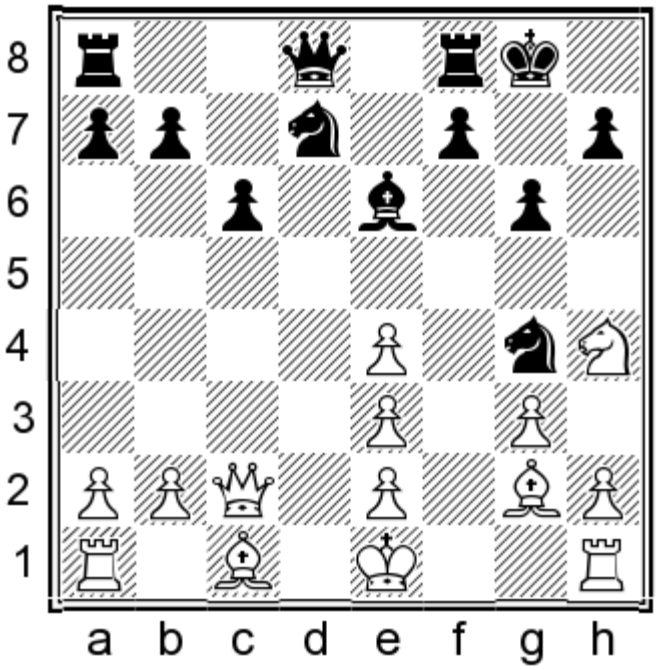
The point behind the whole idea is that 6.♘xe5?? loses a piece to 6...♗xa3 7.bxa3 ♕d4–+ and the double attack wins.

6...e4



7.♘fe5!

This is the novelty, and seems to be a very strong one as it causes problems for Black. We can be sure that Grischuk was well-prepared with this move. Nobody dared to jump to the center before, because the knight seems to get trapped after f6, but White always has some resource to save it. Just a day before our game another battle between two GMs continued with 7.♘h4 ♗e6 8.♘e3 ♘f6 The knight is misplaced on h4. 9.f3 White naturally tries to bring back the knight to the game, but Black finds a spectacular way to continue: 9...♗c5 10.♘hf5 0-0 11.fxe4 g6 12.♕c2 ♘bd7 13.♘h4 ♗xe3 14.dxe3 ♘g4



With an unusual pawn structure. Black must be completely fine here, as the tripled pawns and the e5 square compensate for the small material deficit. Teterev-Matlakov, ECC 2014.

7...♕c7

Black tries to play against the knights, as they are tied together, but the queen soon turns out to be misplaced on c7. I did not find equality after other moves either. In the case of 7...f6 White always wants to save his knight with 8.♘e3! freeing the c4 square for the other knight and the f6 move turns out to be a big weakening of Black's camp. 8...♗e6 9.♘5c4 f5 Black is completely undeveloped, so White can launch a quick attack with 10.d3! exd3 11.0-0! The e-file is going to open and the rook will create serious problems for Black.

On 7...♗e6 Grischuk had probably prepared 8.♕c2! with the idea 8...f6 9.♘g4! saving the knight in a different way. The f6 move is a weakening again. ♗xg4 drops a pawn after ♕xe4 and taking the bishop next.

8.d4!

White not only supports his knight in the center, but also prepares to develop his bishop to f4 with a very unpleasant tempo.

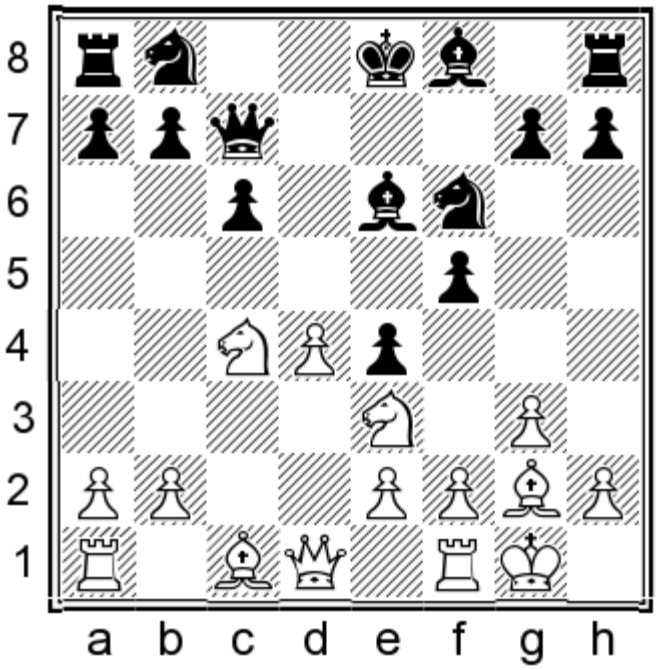
8...f6

Black is already forced to do something concrete, otherwise he simply ends up in a bad position after ♗f4. 8...exd3 9.♘xd3 when the big lead in development guarantees White an advantage.

9.♘e3!

White uses the same intermediate move to save his knight.

9...♗e6 10.♘5c4 f5 11.0-0 ♘f6



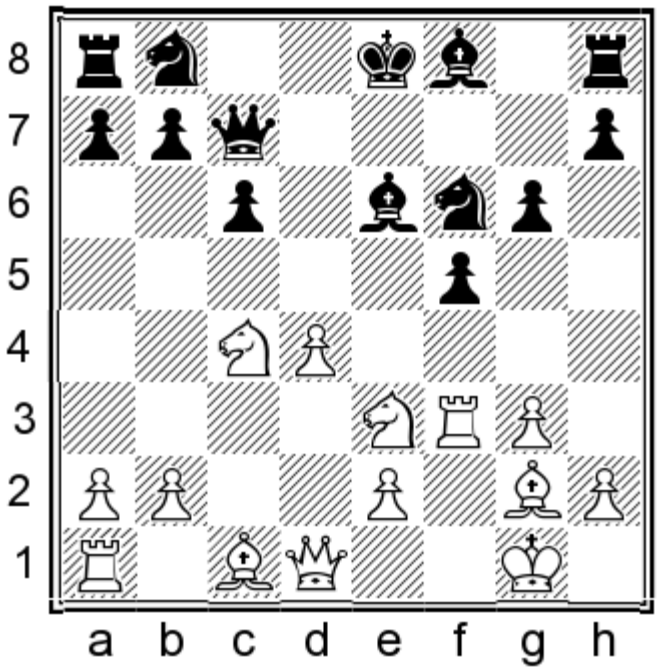
If Black manages to finish development with ♗e7 and 0-0, he might solve his opening problems — and the d5 square could be a big trumph for him in the future. Grischuk plays very principled chess; he undermines the e4 pawn, opens the diagonal for his fianchettoed bishop and wants to make use of the situation of the black king, which needs some moves to scuttle to safety.

12.f3! exf3 13.♖xf3!?

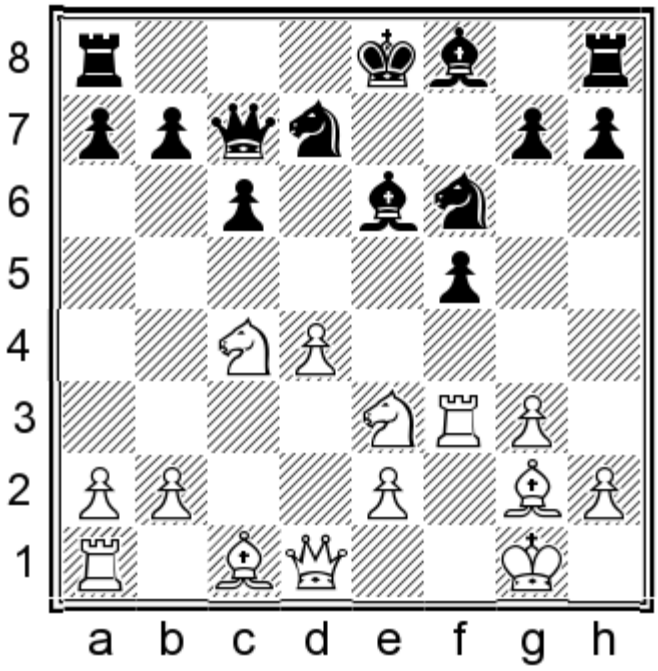
Grischuk was already planning the following fantastic tactical breaks. White could also have gained an advantage had he handled the position in a positional manner: 13.♗xf3 ♘bd7 14.♕d3! g6 15.♘g2! This is the key idea if White takes back on f3 with the bishop! ♗f4 is coming next move and Black faces serious difficulties.

13...g6

Black tries to strengthen his weakness on f5, but it further delays the development by one tempo.



On 13...♘bd7 Grischuk had planned the following tempting exchange sacrifice:

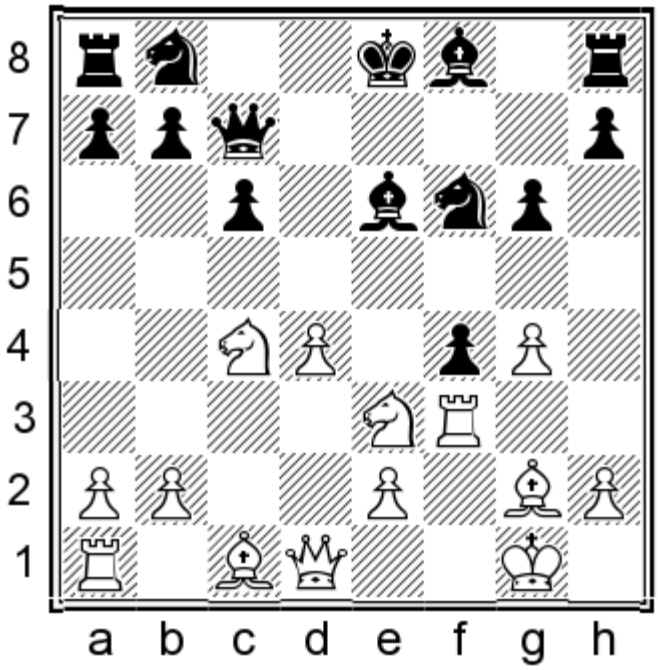


14.♖xf5!! ♗xf5 15.♘xf5± and ♗f4 followed by ♘d6 check, or just e4-e5 swipes Black from the board.

14.g4!

The most direct move, following the same principle to open the position to the black king which is stuck in the center. However the move required a lot of calculation, which was impossibe to do because the position is too complex and there are no forced lines. Intuition plays a much bigger role in finding such moves!

14...f4



14...♘xg4 would have been met by 15.♘xg4 fxg4

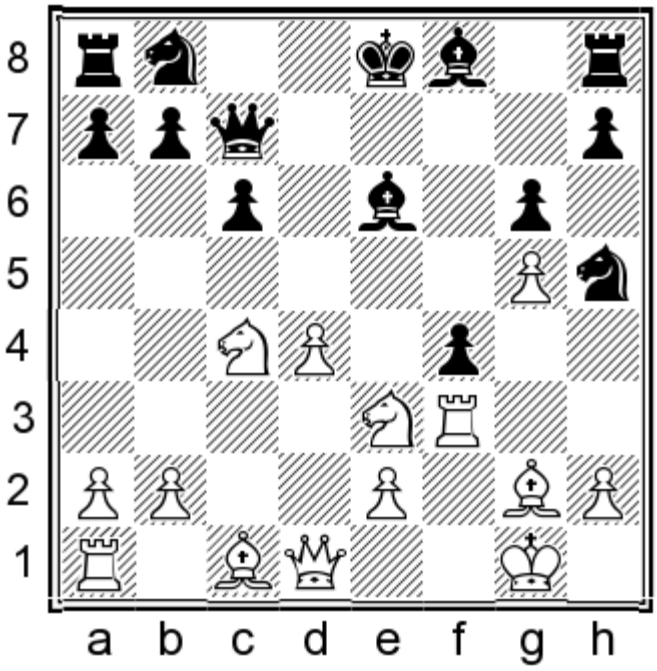
(*15...♗xc4 16.♗f4 ♗d6 17.♖e3+ ♔d8 18.♘e5+*- the situation of the king on d8 cannot lead to anything good. White soon opens the center with d5 and Black should quickly collapse.)

16.♖e3! Quite an unusual way to increase the pressure. 16...♕d7 17.♕b3 ♗e7 18.♘d6++- Black collapses again. Perhaps the best response would have been 14...♘bd7 15.gxf5 gxf5 16.♕c2 0-0-0 17.♘xf5 White has an extra pawn and a clear advantage, but Black might hope for counterplay on the g-file after ♘h5, preventing ♗f4.

15.g5!

Another difficult move to find, which again required some precise calculations and a lot of intuition. A strong alternative was 15.♖xf4! ♕xf4 16.♘d5! A beautiful motif: the queen is trapped! Black can get 3 pieces for it with 16...♘xd5 17.♗xf4 ♘xf4 but after 18.♕b3! Black is too much behind in development. White will be able to gain a decisive advantage by playing the most direct and energetic moves.

15...♘h5



At first sight Black is fine. He has managed to consolidate his f5 weakness and both white knights are hanging. There is no way back for Grischuk — he must follow the plan he started with 12.f3 and keep on opening the position to create decisive threats against the e8 king.

16.d5! cxd5 17.♘xd5

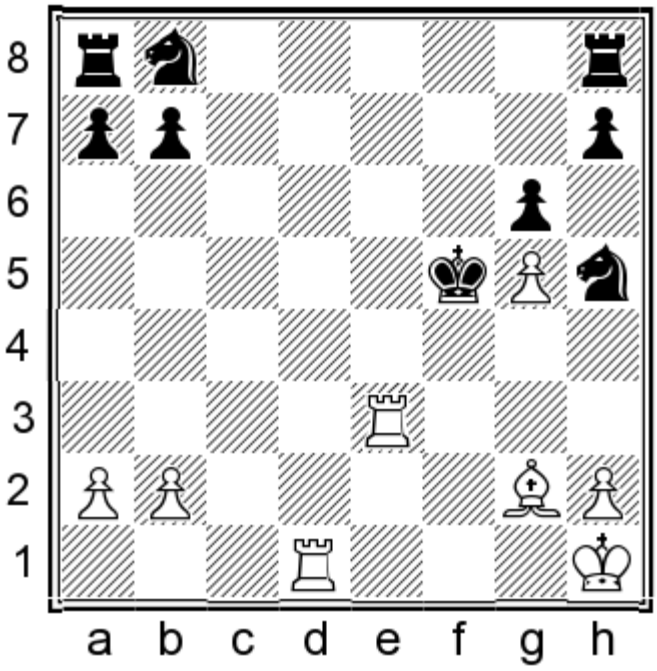
Black has different ways to win a piece, but all of them are bad.

17...♕c5+

17...♕xc4 loses to 18.♖c3 ♗c5+ 19.e3! This is the best, otherwise Black would have the option to play ♕d4! 19...fxe3 The queen is not hanging because of the e2 threat, but White has the very strong 20.♗xe3! ♗xe3+ 21.♔h1! ♕d4 22.♘c7+ ♔f7 23.♘xe6 ♕xd1+

(*23...♔xe6 24.♕f3+-* will end up badly for Black with such a king.)

24.♖xd1 ♔xe6 25.♖xe3+ Even without the queens, White is mating with his remaining pieces. The black pieces are unable to participate in the defense. 25...♔f5



(*25...♔f7 26.♖f1++-*)

26.♖d5+ ♔g4 27.h3+ ♔h4 28.♖e4+ ♔g3 29.♖d3+ ♔f2 30.♖f3#

18.♘ce3! fxe3

A better try would have been 18...♗g7 trying to castle as quickly as possible, but White wins here as well after 19.b4! ♕d4

(If *19...♕c8 20.♗a3!* threatening ♖c1. Black cannot castle because of ♘e7! *20...♗xa1 21.♕xa1* and ♕e5 wins next move!)

20.♕xd4 ♗xd4 21.♘xf4! ♘xf4

(*21...♗xa1 22.♘xe6+-* Somehow, Black is unable to consolidate. His pieces are just too bad.)

22.♖xf4 ♗xa1 23.♗xb7+- winning back the rook and maintaining a decisive advantage.

19.b4!

Actually 19.♗xe3 ♕d6 20.♗d4 was also winning, but the text move is even better.

19...♕d6

19...♕c8 loses quickly to 20.♗b2 ♗g7 21.♗xg7 ♘xg7 22.♕d4+-

20.♖xe3!

Grischuk once again finds the most precise move to continue the attack. White is threatening to win the queen with ♖xe6 ♕xe6 ♘c7! 20.♗b2 is tempting, but it allows some counterchances after 20...♘c6! 21.♗xh8 0-0-0 and Black continues resisting.

20...♘a6 21.♗b2

With the knight on a6, Black cannot castle queenside as it would drop his queen after ♖c1 ♔b8 ♗e5.

21...♗g7 22.♘f6+!

Black resigned in view of the following forced line: 22.♘f6+ ♔e7 23.♕xd6+ ♔xd6 24.♖d1+ ♔e7 25.♖d7+! ♔f8 26.♖xe6+- and mate is coming soon. Simply brilliant play by Grischuk!

1–0

GAME 37
B. Gelfand (2748)
D. Andreikin (2722)
Baku FIDE Grand Prix 2014 Baku AZE (1.4)
02.10.2014, [E15]
Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

Andreikin wass clearly the big surprise of the event. With one very good tournament (the previous World Cup) Andreikin qualified for the WCC Candidates and for the current Grand Prix. But it seems that the Russian is not really ready to play against the very best chessplayers in the world. We will see a great one-sided crush by Boris Gelfand!

1.d4 e6

Sometimes Black gives White the chance to enter the French...

2.c4

but of course Gelfand doesn't!

2...♘f6 3.♘f3

Gelfand usually avoids the Nimzo, which could appear after 3.♘c3 ♗b4.

3...b6

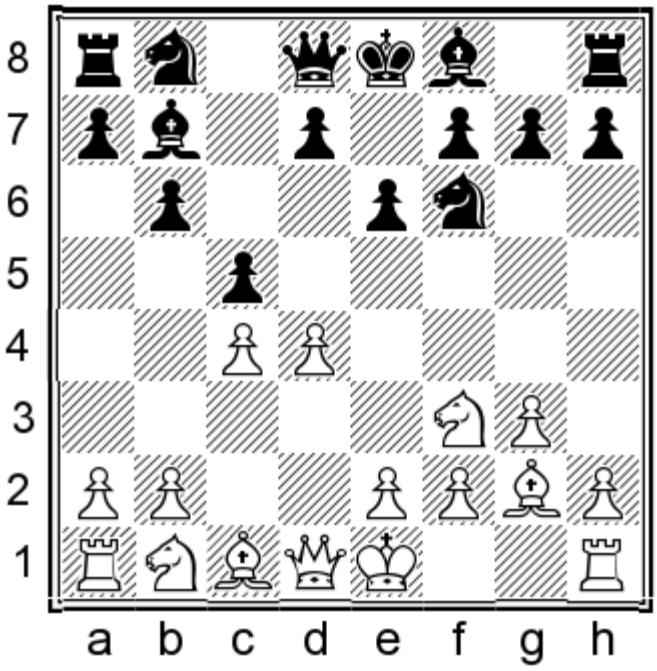
Andreikin also plays 3...d5.

4.g3 ♗b7

4...♗a6 is the other main line.

5.♗g2 c5

is a very risky line for Black.



5...♗e7 is the usual continuation. 6.0-0 0-0 Black is waiting for White to play 7.♘c3 before going 7...♘e4. Grischuk likes to play this line with Black.

6.d5!

Direct and strong. Gelfand doesn't like to joke around in the openings. He is usually very well prepared and has a lot of interesting opening ideas in his pocket.

6...exd5 7.cxd5!?

This is already almost a novelty for the top level, although this move looks very logical to me. 7.♘g5 and 7.♘h4 were the most-played moves in previous games and Gelfand himself has played 7.♘h4 on one occasion.

7...♗xd5

The pawn has to be taken, otherwise White is just much better. 7...♘xd5? 8.♘h4 and White is winning a piece.

8.♘c3 ♗c6

Black had two options and I think the move in the game is the most logical. The other option was 8...♗b7 9.e4 (*9.0-0 ♗e7 10.e4* might also be interesting.) 9...♘xe4 10.♘d5 ♘c6 11.0-0 with a strong attack on the black king.

9.e4

Gelfand is clearly still in his preparation and to play such a position over the board is very hard for Black. White's play is quite simple; he develops pieces and starts to attack. Right now the threat is to play e5.

9...d6

A very human reply. In the event of 9...♘xe4 White has two interesting options: 10.♘d5

(After *10.♘xe4 ♗xe4 11.♕e2 ♕e7 12.0-0* the position also looks really dangerous for Black. *12...♘c6* Now White has two major options — either playing 13.♖e1, or 13.♗f4 — and both look pretty atractive.)

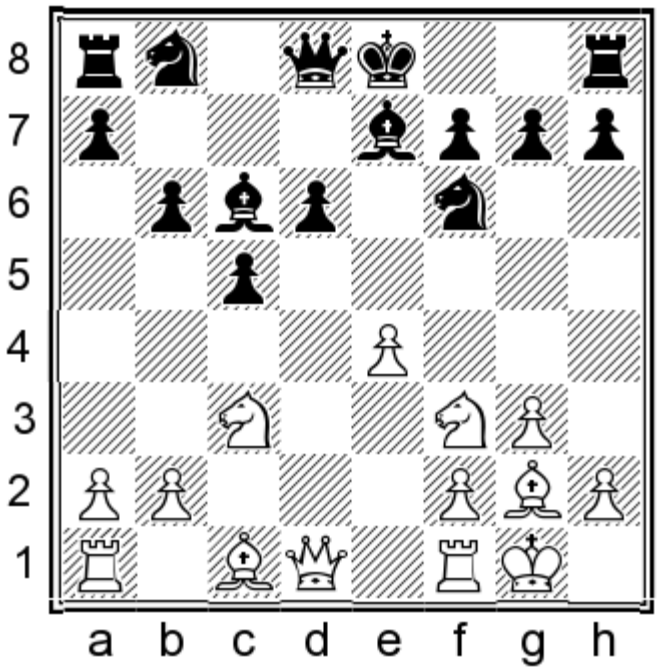
10...♗e7 11.0-0 0-0 12.♗f4 White's initiative is very dangerous here because of the terrible development of the black pieces.

10.0-0

It is easy to see that White has great compensation for the pawn. The black pieces are very poorly placed.

10...♗e7

Andreikin wants to castle.



11.♘h4!

A very strong and typical move. The white knight wants to get to f5 after which White has the idea of playing f4-e5 or putting pressure on the d6 pawn.

11...g6?!

This moves just doesn't look good. Black had to secure the king's position and should have castled in any case,e.g. 11...0-0 12.♘f5 and now play something like 12...♘bd7 — of course Black's position is clearly worse, but the real fight would still be ahead of us.

12.♗h6

Of course White prevents Black from castling.

12...♗f8

It is already difficult to recommend anything better. White just wants to play f4, ♕d2 and ♖ad1, with crushing play in the center.

13.♗xf8

13.♕d2 was perhaps also possible, but the move in the game just looks very logical.

13...♔xf8 14.♕d2

White simply wants to play ♖ad1 and take the d6 pawn. 14.e5 is premature since after 14...♘e8 White's position is, of course, still very good, but we are entering complications that are not really needed. An interesting option was 14.f4, preparing e5. 14...♔g7 15.e5 and White's attack looks very dangerous here.

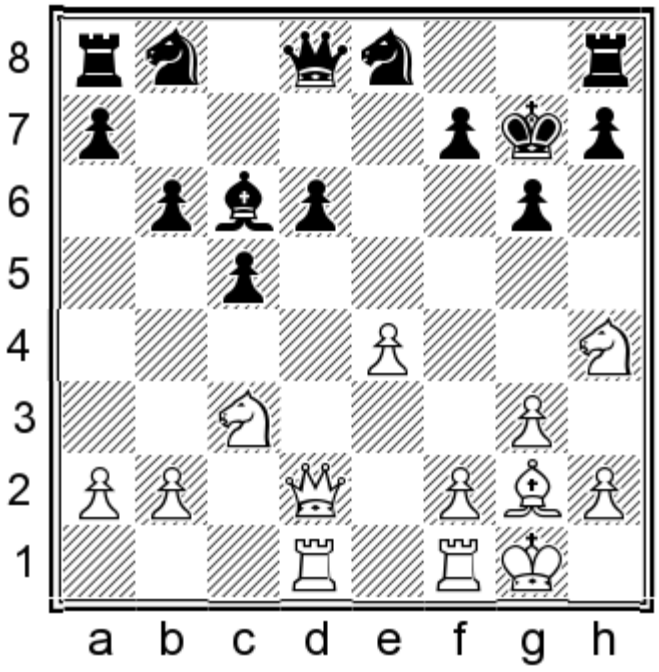
14...♘e8

14...♔g7 would lead to about the same position as in the game after 15.♖ad1

15.♖ad1

the somplest approach. 15.♕h6+ is not any better because after 15...♔g8 16.♖ad1 ♘d7 17.f4 ♕e7 Black could try to hold things together, even if White is, naturally, better here.

15...♔g7



16.f4

White begins the crushing attack. Now Gelfand can choose if he wants to play e5 or maybe f5.

16...♕c8

In a very bad position, Andreikin makes things extremely easy for White. The queen is not greatly placed on c8.

17.♘d5

Good and strong! White is preparing the e5 push and puts the knight on d5 first to avoid the exchange of bishops.

17...♖f8 18.e5

Wow, what domination by the white pieces!

18...dxe5

White has a lot of very tempting moves and Gelfand picks the best one!

19.f5!

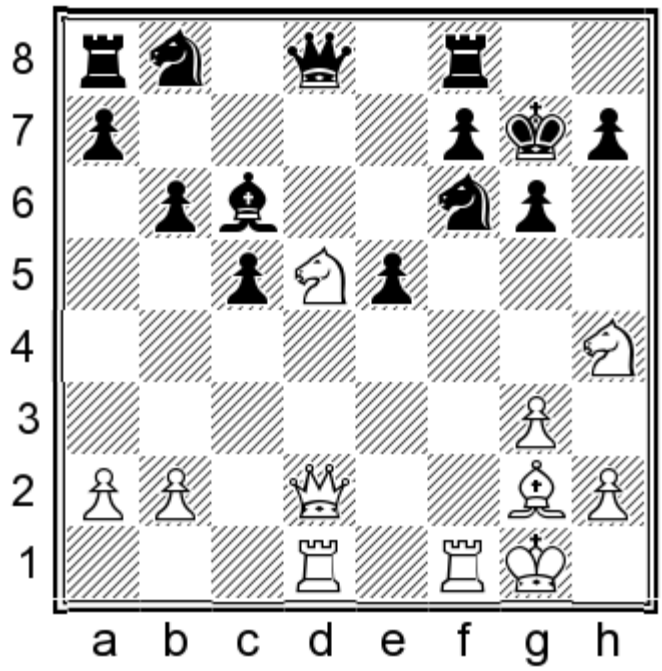
An excellent move! Black has no defence against the upcoming f6.

19...♕d8

19...f6 20.fxg6 hxg6 21.♘xg6 and Black can't play 21...♔xg6 because 22.♘e7+ wins the queen.

20.f6+ ♘xf6

It was time to resign, but Andreikin probably wanted to cross the 20 moves border.



20...♔h8 would lead to a complete disgrace: 21.♕h6 ♖g8 22.♘e7 What a position!

21.♘f5+ ♔h8

21...gxf5 22.♕g5+ ♔h8 23.♘xf6 followed by mate on h7 soon.

22.♕h6 ♖g8 23.♘xf6

After 23...♕xf6 24.♖d6 the fight would not continue for many more moves before White would mate the black king. A really nice game by White and clearly not so well played by Andreikin, whose pieces ♘b8 and ♖a8 remained on their starting positions for the entire game.

1–0

GAME 38
S. Karjakin (2767)
B. Jobava (2717)
Tashkent FIDE GP 2014 Tashkent UZB (5.1)
26.10.2014, [B10]
Annotated by Balogh Csaba

Jobava wins a very nice attacking game with the black pieces.

1.e4 c6 2.♘f3

Karjakin usually plays the very sharp Advance Variation against the Caro-Kann (2.d4 d5 3.e5), but this time he chooses a rather calm setup to avoid Jobava's creativity in the middlegame.

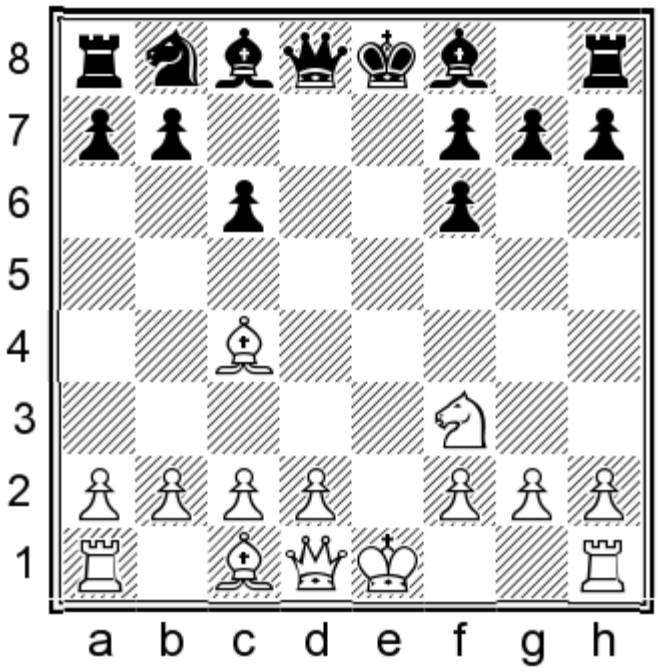
2...d5 3.♘c3 dxe4

3...♗g4 is the most common reaction.

4.♘xe4 ♘f6 5.♘xf6+ exf6

White should have a very small, but long-term advantage due to the better pawn structure.

6.♗c4



6...♕e7+!?

This clever check confuses the development of the white pieces. At such an early stage of the game White should avoid trading queens, but then he must retreat with his bishop to a more passive position.

7.♗e2 ♕c7!

Black is not wasting time with his queen moves, because it belongs on c7 anyway. White cannot make use of the

delaying of the development, because ♗d6 followed by 0-0 arrives in time.

8.d4 ♗d6 9.0-0 0-0 10.h3

A useful move to avoid the bishop's development to g4.

10...♖d8

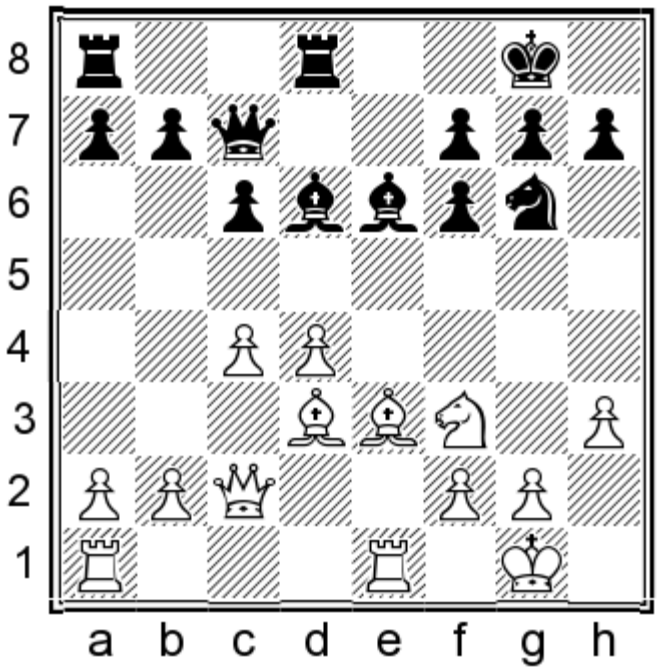
I like this move a lot! Black does not yet decide where to develop his c8 bishop: he improves his other pieces first with ♘d7-f8 and develops the bishop only afterwards, according to White's setup. It is not easy to asses the ideal arrangement of the white pieces. White should first decide whether he wants to build up his position with c4 or c3. Both are playable and both have their pluses and minuses. Karjakin chooses the more agressive one with c4... In case of 10...♗f5 White could head for a superior endgame with 11.♗d3! ♗xd3 12.♕xd3 followed by ♗d2 and ♖fe1. In all endgames Black will feel the drawback of his doubled pawns, as White will be able to create a passed pawn on the queenside, while Black cannot do the same on the kingside.

11.♗e3 ♘d7 12.c4 ♘f8 13.♗d3

White activates his bishop. We can see the effect of the 6...♕e7 check here. The bishop was misplaced on e2, and it has to be removed from the e-file also as White is planning to occupy it with his rooks.

13...♘g6 14.♕c2 ♗e6 15.♖fe1?!

This was played too quickly and Karjakin probaby missed Black's reaction!



15.♗f5! should have been played, although Black is only very slightly worse after 15...♕d7 16.♗xe6 fxe6 getting rid of the doubled pawns. Black is slightly worse because of the f7-f6 weakening of the e6 pawn, although it should still be adequate after Black regroups his pieces with ♖e8, ♖ad8 and ♗b8, with a flexible position.

15...♕d7!

An excellent move! Tactical players such as Jobava easily find such ideas. Black is willing to sacrifice on h3! It is actually very dangerous, and from White's point of view it is not easy to prevent it at all.

16.♗d2

Karjakin is not afraid, and he continues improving his position. 16.♗f1 was much safer, but very passive. Black could activate his pieces with 16...♗f5, immediately occupying the diagonal. 17.♕c3 a5 followed by ♖e8 and sometimes even ♗e4 and f5-f4 ideas could prove to be dangerous.

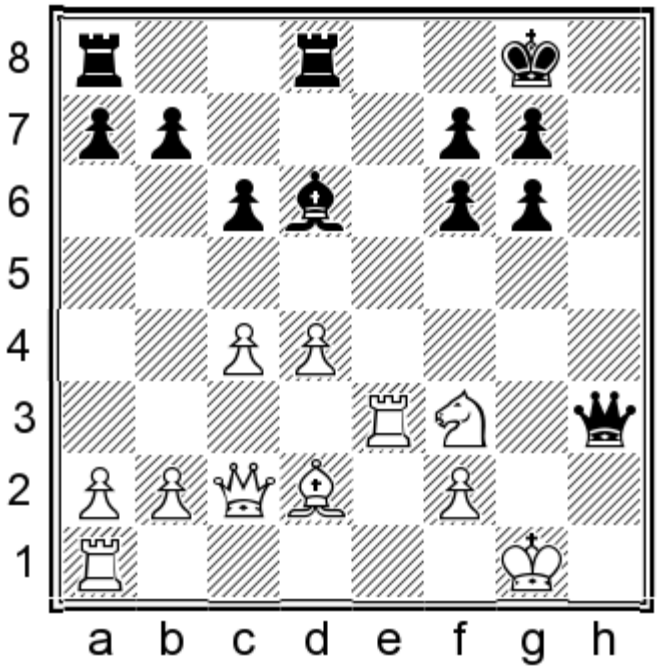
16...♗xh3!

Of course! Black is consistent. This sacrifice cannot be calculated, only intuition helps, but Black can easily foresee that a draw by perpetual check will always be to hand and he can decide to use it, or to play for more.

17.gxh3 ♕xh3 18.♗xg6

The only move, otherwise the knight joining the attack will prove decisive. 18.♖e3 is refuted by 18...♘h4! 19.♘xh4 ♗h2+ 20.♔h1 ♗g3+ 21.♔g1 ♕h2+ 22.♔f1 ♕xf2#

18...hxg6 19.♖e3



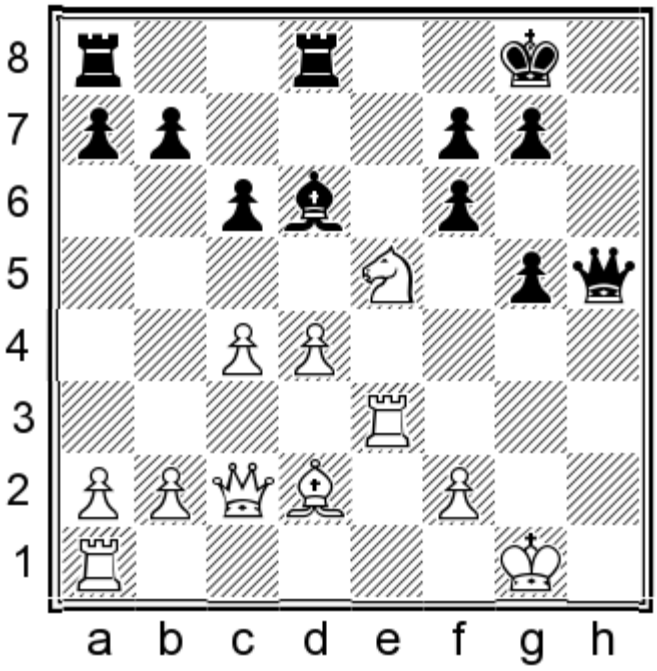
19...g5!

Great play! Black wants to push away the knight with g4 in order to give a check on h2. Objectively the game is drawn, but in a practical game White has a much harder task, because he must always choose between 2-3 seemingly equivalent moves, but some of them could actually be worse than the others.

20.c5

20.♘e5 was a tricky alternative and Black should react precisely with 20...♕e6!

(*20...♕h5* looks more natural. The knight is under attack and then a check on h2 is possible. But suddenly White has the extremely strong



21.♔g2!! fxe5 22.♖h1 ♕g6 23.♖eh3! This is the point and Black can only avoid getting mated by losing big material... *23...♔f8 24.♖h8+ ♔e7 25.♕xg6 fxg6 26.♗xg5++-*)

21.♔g2? is not strong anymore, as Black can neutralize the h-file with 21...fxe5 22.♖h1 f5 freeing the f7 square for the king. From a practical point of view, the best move seems to be 20.♖ae1 g4 21.♕f5! and the game ends in a draw after

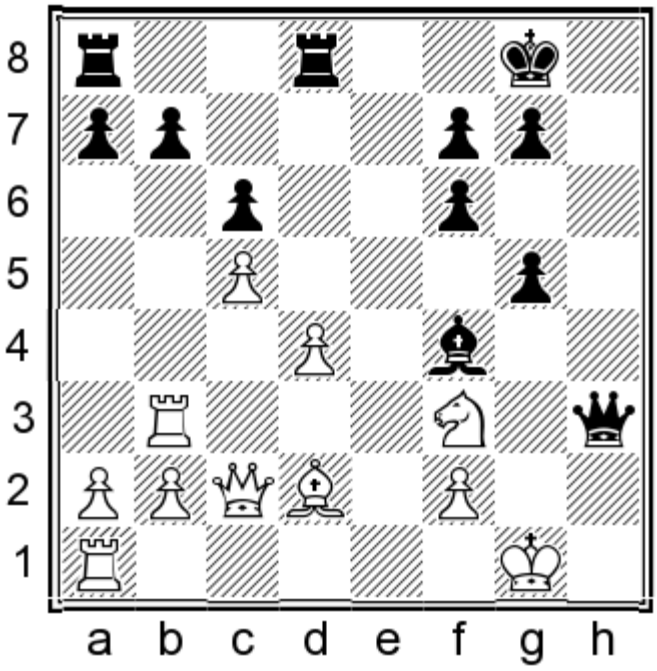
(*21.♘e5 ♕h5*)

21...g6 22.♕xf6 gxf3 23.♕xf3 ♗h2+ The endgame after 23...♕xf3 24.♖xf3 is also just a draw. 24.♔h1 ♗g3+ 25.♔g1 ♗h2 Karjakin had seen this line, but he was still hoping for something more...

20...♗f4!

20...g4? did not work in view of 21.♘e5 and cxd6 next.

21.♖b3



21...♗c7!

Another great decision by Black! Jobava keeps his strong, attacking bishop on the board and he creates the decisive threat of ♖xd4! ♘xd4 ♗h2 ♔h1 ♗g3 and ♕h2-f2 mate. 21...g4? did not quite work because of the cool defensive resource 22.♕f5! and suddenly White wins! Black could have forced a draw with 21...♕g4+ 22.♔f1 ♕h3+ 23.♔g1

(*23.♔e2?* loses to *23...♖e8+ 24.♗e3 ♗xe3 25.♖xe3 ♖xe3+ 26.fxe3 ♕g2+* and the knight falls.)

21...♖xd4 also did not work immediately, because of 22.♗xf4 ♖xf4 23.♘h2! The only move, but it's good enough!

22.♕c4

Karjakin parries the ♖xd4 threat and intends to defend with ♕f1. 22.♖e1? allows 22...♖xd4! 23.♘xd4 ♗h2+ 24.♔h1 ♗g3+ 25.♔g1 ♕h2+ 26.♔f1 ♕xf2#;

22.♖xb7? also loses to 22...♖xd4!

22...♕h5

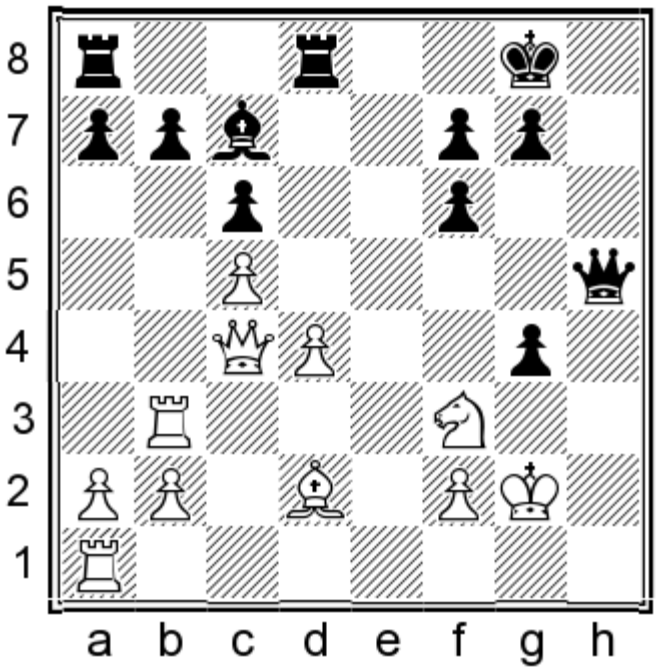
Black removes his queen from the pin and refreshes the g4 threat! It was more forcing to start with 22...♕g4+ 23.♔f1 with a transposition to the game.

23.♔g2

Karjakin sets a devilish trap again, but Jobava does not fall into it. 23.♖xb7 is simply met by the cold-blooded 23...♖ac8 when f3 is hanging and g4 is coming next.

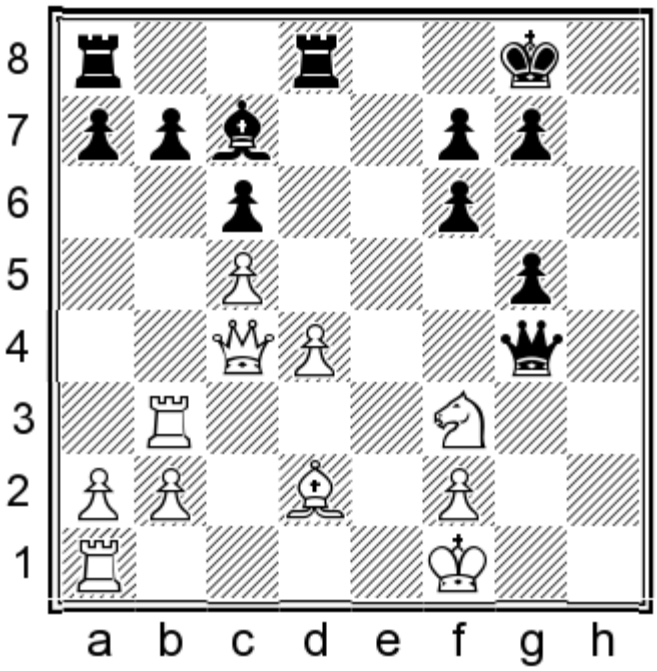
23...♕g4+!

23...g4? was seemingly decisive, but suddenly after



24.♘h4!! White is the one who wins the game as ♖h1 will appear next and White preserves his extra piece. 24...♕xh4 25.♖h1 traps the queen.

24.♔f1



24...♖e8!

Logical and strong! Black cuts the king off from his evacuation route along the e-file. Black is threatening ♖e4 and ♕h3-♖g4 mate.

25.♖e1 ♕h3+!

Jobava uses his queen extremely effectively in this game. He sends the king back to g1 so as to to avoid the recapture by the king on e1 followed by running to the queenside.

26.♔g1 ♖xe1+ 27.♗xe1 ♕g4+!

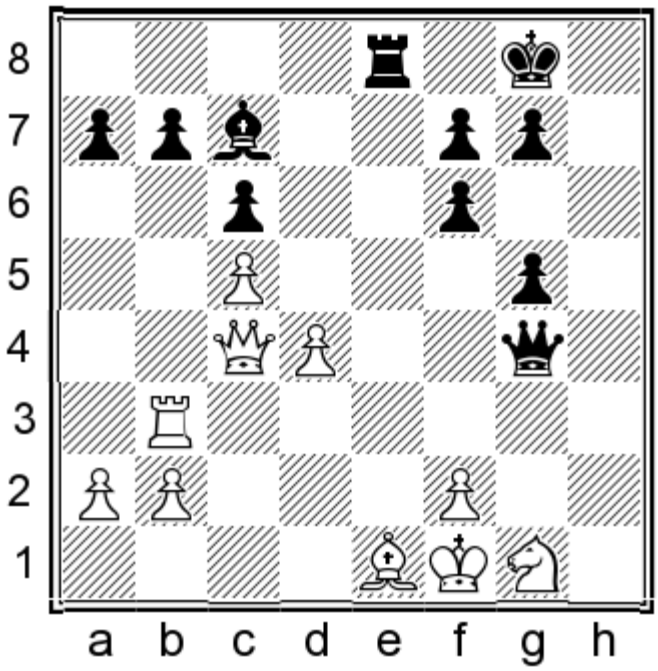
And he removes the queen from the pin again, before bringing the other rook to the attack. 27...♖e8 is met by 28.♘e5!

28.♔f1 ♖e8!

It is getting more and more unpleasant after each move.

29.♘g1

Trying to open the 3rd rank to bring the rook into the defense.



29.♗d2 does not help either. Black wins after 29...♕h5!–+ as there is no adequate defense for White.

29...♗h2!

Both players were already low on time, but Jobava continues with his perfect attacking moves.

30.♘e2?

A blunder, but the position was desperate anyway. 30.♘h3 was the only move, but Black holds a huge advantage after 30...♕e4! — threatening e1 and h1. The only move is 31.♖e3 ♕h1+ 32.♔e2 ♖xe3+ 33.fxe3 g4 and White must sacrifice one of his minor pieces to stop the g-pawn. 34.♘f2 (*34.♘f4 g3*–+) 34...♕f3+ 35.♔d2 g3–+

30...♖xe2!

Finishing the game in style!

31.♖xb7

31.♕xe2 ♕g1#

31...♖e6 0–1

GAME 39
L. Aronian (2797)
B. Jobava (2727)
77th Tata Steel GpA Wijk aan Zee NED (9.7)
20.01.2015, [A56]
Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

It had been a very sad tournament for Jobava, who started with an extremely unlucky loss to Ivanchuk and continued by being too optimistic about positions where a draw would often have been the expected result. The tournament had also been going anything but greatly for Aronian, who was on -2 at this point. Anyhow, in the current game White shows excellent preparation with a long-term mating attack idea and precise play when it came to “converting the point”. This game is an excellent example of how to play for the “isolation of your opponent’s pieces from the main action on the board”.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5

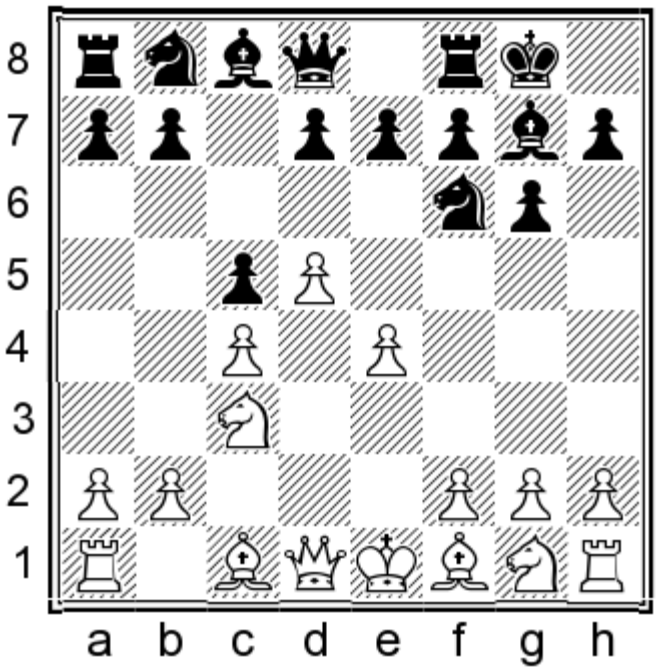
Jobava likes Benoni structures a lot and has already played a lot of games in them. It is a positionally dangerous opening for Black, but very dynamic and Jobava plays it excellently and has shown good results in it. This time, however, things will go very badly for Jobava....

3.d5 g6

There are a lot of move orders — for example Black can start with 3...e6 — but Jobava usually goes for 3...g6.

4.♘c3 ♗g7 5.e4 0-0

This move-order is a big provocation for White to immediately push 6.e5, but things are very unclear after this advance. Black launches a quick attack with ♘e8 and then d6, trying to explode White’s center.



6.♗d3

A very safe move and in many lines the bishop stands perfectly on d3.

6...e6 7.h3

This move might look slightly strange, but h3 is very tricky. In the event of exd5 exd5 Black usually continues with d6, and in case the white knight is placed on f3- which is also usual — the h3 move is needed anyway because Black's idea is to play ♗g4 and ♗xf3.

7...exd5 8.exd5 a6

Jobava does not hurry with the d6 move and tries to threaten the immediate b5 first.

9.a4

A very consequent move. On the one hand White is stopping Black's play with b5, but on the other hand a4 gives the b4 square up completely.

9...a5?!

Very creative play by Black, but Jobava clearly under-estimates the deep idea of White, which we will see already in the next few moves. 9...d6 10.♘f3 would lead to the usual position.

10.♘ge2!

This little move is actually very strong. It is clear that White's play has to be on the kingside, where he has more space, and to develop the knight to f3 just doesn't make any sense. Usually the knight must go to f3 because Black plays d6 and ♘bd7 with the idea of playing ♘e5 next, but now it is obvious that after the a5 move Black is planning to play his knight to b4, so the knight will be perfectly placed on e2.

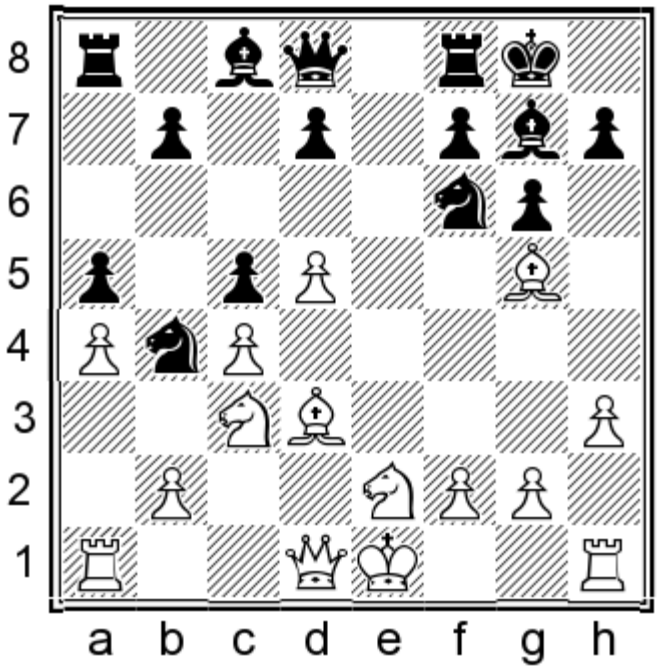
10...♘a6

Jobava follows his plan.

11.♗g5

This move looks a bit strange to me. Of course it is not a bad one, and the bishop is nicely placed on g5 — provoking Black into playing h6 and making a weakness on the kingside — but why not just castle first?!

11...♘b4



12.♗b1

Of course White does not give Black a chance to play ♘xd3. The white rook on a1 looks like it is passively placed, but it can be very quickly activated via a3.

12...b6

In my opinion this is also a move in the wrong direction. Probably 12...d6 would have been a safer option.

13.0-0 ♗a6

Jobava tries to provoke the b3 move, after which White would not have the idea of playing ♖a3 anymore, and the rook would have to remain passive on a1.

14.♘b5

A very logical move.

14...h6

Now White needs to decide whether to go to h4 or stay on the c1–h6 diagonal.

15.♗c1!

In my opinion this is another great decision by Aronian. One can ask oneself why not play 15.♗e3? But the answer is easy: White is planning ♖a3-♖g3 and an attack on the black king. Of course 15.♗h4 would not have been a bad option either, but to keep the bishop eyeing up the black king is just too tempting.

15...♗xb5 16.axb5 ♘e8

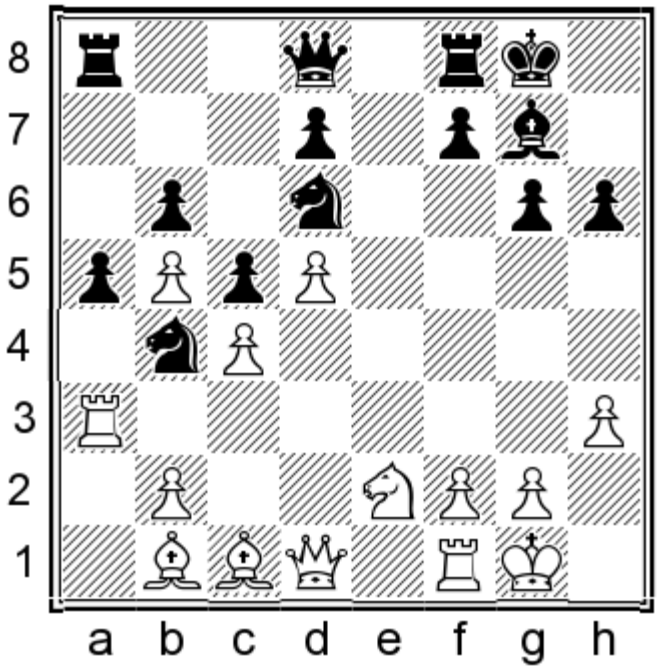
Black is trying to make use the fact that the d6 move was not played and to get the knight there instead, but again the black king is almost without defenders. Another very important key is that the black knight is nicely placed on b4, but

all the white pieces are moving “around” the knight, making its mission almost useless.

17.♖a3

Here comes the rook!

17...♘d6



18.♖g3!

and of course White should not care about the c4 pawn any longer.

18...♘xc4

Considering his tournament position, can we blame Jobava for taking on c4 and risking getting mated? No we can’t!

19.♘f4

All of White’s pieces are joining in the attack!

19...♘e5

After this move Black does not even have any practical chances anymore. The position was probably lost anyway, but it was worth trying 19...♘xb2 20.♗xb2

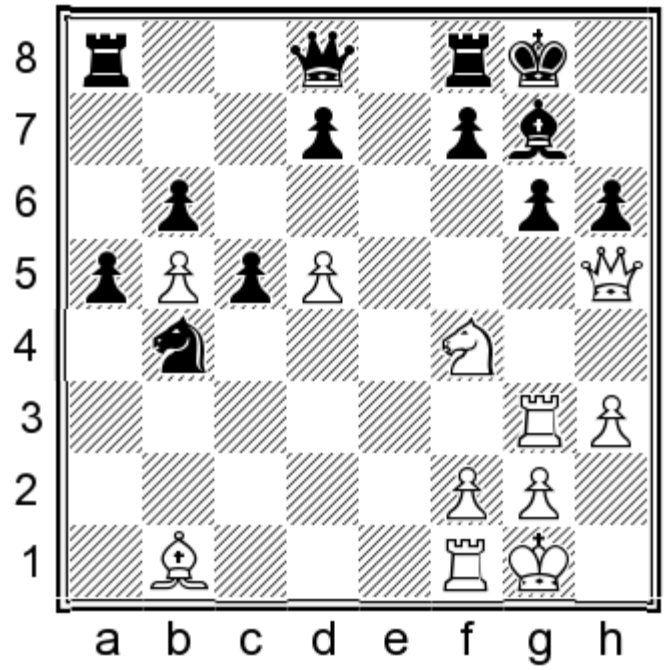
a) 20.♕d2 also seems to be a good move. 20...♘c4 21.♕e2 and White is trying to get a similar position as in the game, connected to ♘h5 ideas. 21...♘e5 (*21...♘d6 22.♘h5*) 22.♘h5 and White’s attack is very strong.;

b) 20.♕g4 doesn’t lead anywhere. 20...♕g5! A nice move! 21.♘xg6 ♕xg4 22.♘e7+ ♔h8 23.♖xg4 ♘2d3 and the position is very unclear, since the black a-pawn can become very dangerous.

20...♗xb2 How to continue that attack now?! 21.♕h5

(Another move that leads to very unclear play is *21.♗xg6 fxg6 22.♘xg6 ♗g7* and it is hard to say who is better here.)

21...♗g7



22.♘xg6! To see this kind of line from afar is actually not easy at all. 22...fxg6 23.♕xg6 ♖f7 24.♕h7+ ♔f8 and White now has the winning move 25.♗g6! The decisive factor once again is that the black knight on b4 is totally out of the game. 25...♖f6 26.♖e1 and White will deliver mate very soon.

20.♘h5!

Now the game is basically over. The bishop on g7 is Black's main defender and, once it is gone, the position will collapse like a house of cards.

20...♕h4

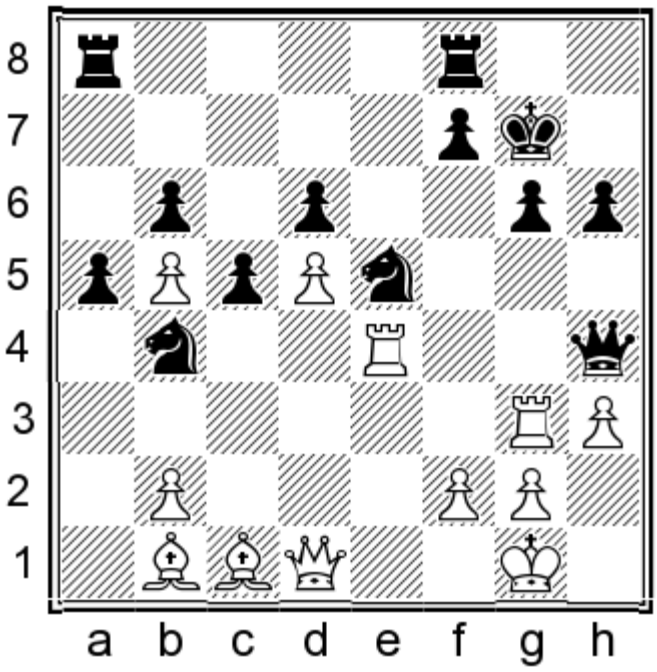
After 20...gxh5 21.♗xh6 ♘g6 22.♕xh5 White is winning as he has two ideas in mind, to play ♗xg6 or f4-f5.

21.♘xg7 ♔xg7 22.♖e1

Another nice move. White brings his other rook into the attack.

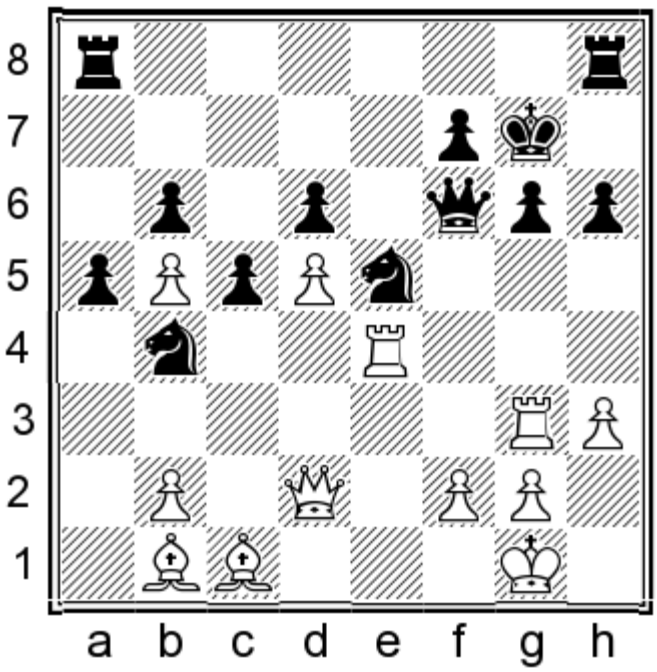
22...d6 23.♖e4

Black's position is on the verge of being lost.



23...♕d8?

After this move the game is over. A tougher defense would have been 23...♕f6 and now White has a couple of different moves, one of them being 24.♕d2 ♖h8 and now comes the very strong



25.b3! with the idea of playing ♗b2 and f4. I don't see many chances for Black to survive the attack.

24.♕h5

and the game is just over! On 24...♖h8 25.♖xe5 dxe5 26.♗xg6 is mating. The conclusion from this game is straightforward: White played around the pretty-looking knight on b4 and simply mated Black. A very constructive game from a positional point of view!

1–0

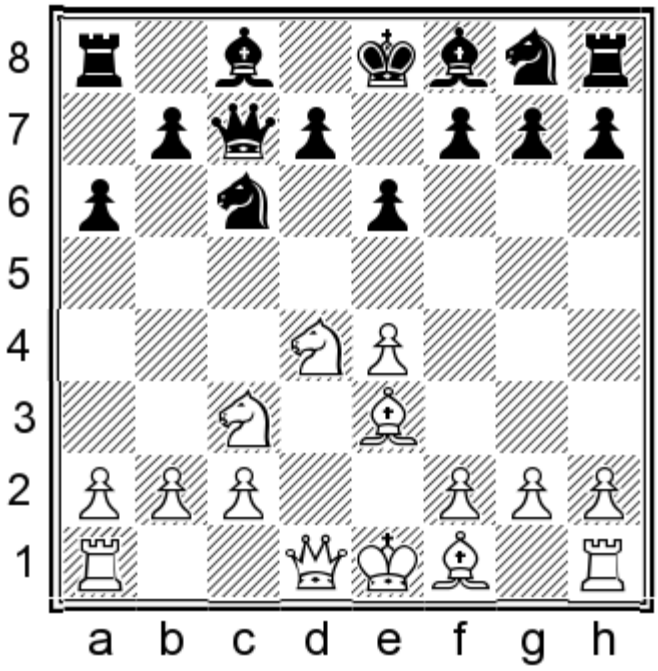
GAME 40
Yi Wei (2675)
A. Haast (2352)
77th Tata Steel GpB Wijk aan Zee NED (12.4)
24.01.2015, [B48]
Annotated by Balogh Csaba

The winner of the Wijk aan Zee Challengers was the 15-year old Chinese player Wei Yi! He was simply blasting his way through the field. It is worth looking at his brilliant victory in the penultimate round.

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘c6 5.♘c3 ♕c7

The recently very popular Sicilian Paulsen variation.

6.♗e3 a6



7.♕f3

A relatively new alternative to the main lines with ♕d2 and 0-0-0. The idea is to castle queenside here again and White often intends to play ♕g3, offering the trade of queens after which ♕xg3 hxg3 improves his pawn structure, opens the h-file for the rook and it usually yields a better and more easy to play endgame.

7...♘e5 8.♕g3 h5

The young Dutch lady follows the path of her countryman Anish Giri, who played two interesting games with good results in the same tournament, but in the A group.

9.0-0-0 h4 10.♕h3 b5

A standard Sicilian game. The black king stands in the center, therefore White launches a central attack with f4-f5 and Black looks for counterplay on the queenside.

11.f4 ♘c4

11...b4 is a known counterattacking motif, but it makes no sense this time because after 12.♘a4 the b6 square becomes vulnerable!

12.♗xc4 ♕xc4 13.f5

White has already arrived, but the e6 pawn is well protected at the moment, so he still needs to increase the pressure before executing a blow. It is time to finish development for Black...

13...♗b7!

A typical move in some Sicilian lines. Black delays the development of his kingside and brings his bishop and the a8 rook into the game. Going for the a2 pawn with 13...b4 14.♘a4 ♕xa2 loses too many tempi. Black gives up the b6 square and the queen alone cannot create any serious threats. 15.♘b6 ♖b8 16.♘b3! Trapping the queen and securing the b6 square for the knight! Black is in big trouble, e.g. 16...♘f6 17.fxe6 dxe6 18.e5+-

14.♖hf1 e5!

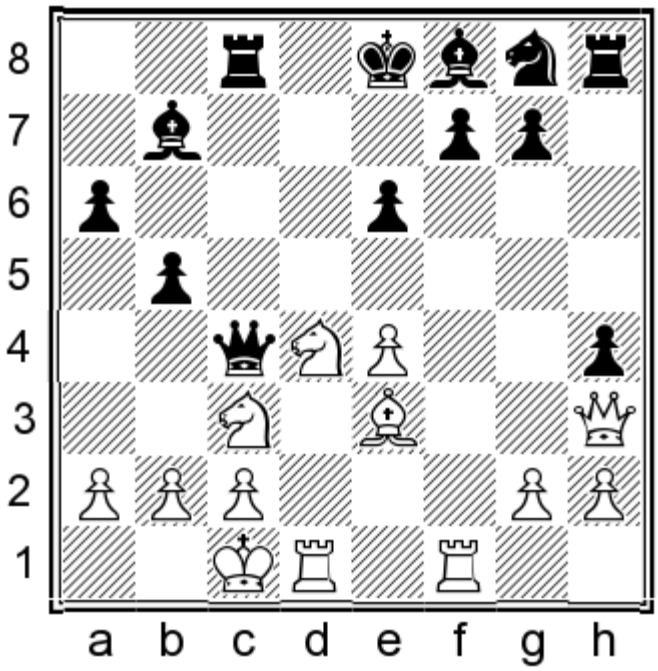
Anne Haast follows Giri's improvement over his own game. In the first encounter against Radjabov, Giri had played 14...♖c8 and the game finished in a spectacular way: 15.fxe6

(However White could have achieved a very promising position after 15.♘f3! The knight is heading to e5, from where it attacks the two most critical targets on d7 and f7. Probably the only move is 15...f6, but to weaken the e6 square cannot lead to anything good either. 15...♘f6

(*15...b4* is too slow *16.♘e5 ♕c7 17.fxe6*+- and White is coming faster!)

16.♘e5 ♕c7 17.♘xd7! ♘xd7 18.fxe6+- Black collapses.)

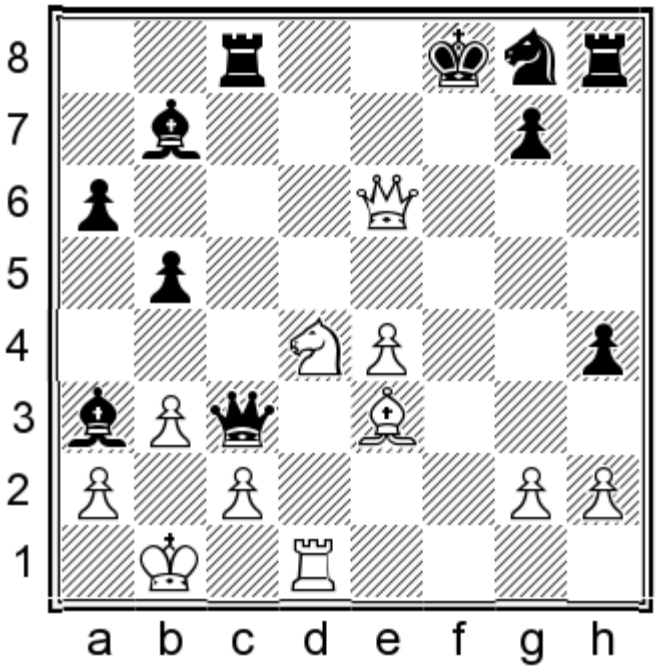
15...dxe6



16.♖xf7

(*16.♘f3 ♘f6* is not the same anymore as in the 15.♘f3 line, because White cannot sacrifice on d7 followed by taking on e6!)

16...♔xf7 17.b3 deflecting the queen from the e6 square. Fortunately for Black, he has 17...♗a3+! freeing the f8 square for the king by means of an intermediate check. 18.♔b1 ♕xc3 19.♕xe6+ ♔f8



White had nothing more than forcing a perpetual check with 20.♖f1+ ♘f6 21.♖xf6+! gxf6 22.♕xf6+ ♔g8 23.♕g6+ ♔f8 24.♕f6+ ♔g8 25.♕g6+ ♔f8 26.♕f6+ 1/2 Radjabov-Giri, Wijk aan Zee 2015

15.♘b3 ♕c7

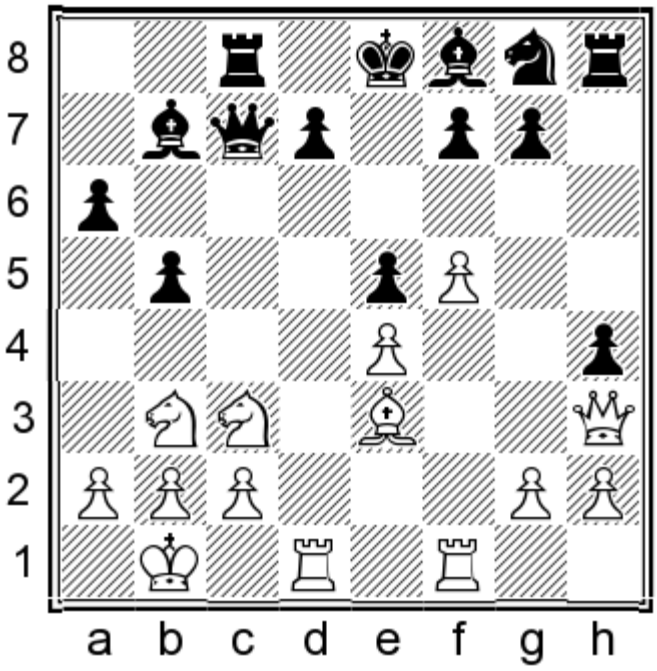
Black must cover the a5 square. 15...♘f6 allowing ♘a5 leads to serious positional problems after 16.♘a5 ♕c7 17.♘xb7 ♕xb7 18.♗g5! White is going to take on f6 and install his knight on d5, which will dominate the entire game. Black is positionally lost there, while 18...♘xe4 loses tactically to 19.♘xe4 ♕xe4 20.♖fe1+- and the e5 falls.

16.♔b1

This is Wei Yi's improvement over the Saric-Giri game. Quite a deep idea, which was missed by Black in this game. Saric played 16.♗g5 when Black had time to play 16...♖c8 17.♖f2 ♗e7! 18.♗xe7 ♔xe7! securing an excellent square for the knight on f6! 19.♖fd2 ♘f6 20.a3 ♖h6! With the idea of walking the king to safety with ♔f8-g8. He could not do it with the rook on h8 because White had g4-g5, using the fact that Black cannot take en passant on g3. 21.♕e3 ♔f8 and Black was fine in Saric-Giri, Wijk aan Zee 2015. The same series of tactical blows with 16.f6 fails immediately because of the hidden point... 16...♘xf6 17.♖xf6 gxf6 18.♗b6 and Black has 18...♗h6+! freeing the f8 square for the king! This is the point of playing 16.♔b1! 19.♔b1 ♕xb6 20.♕xd7+ ♔f8–+

16...♖c8?

Black fails to recognize the differences and falls into the prepared trap!



16...b4 was also wrong, because after 17.♘d5 ♗xd5 18.♖xd5 ♘f6 19.♖a5! deprives Black of his counterplay with a5-a4 and White wants to enter a good knight vs. bad bishop position with ♗g5 where the d5 square is very weak! 19...♘xe4? tactically fails to 20.♕f3! However Black should have played 16...♘f6! which was most probably Giri's preparation. He is already threatening to take on e4 and he seems to be doing well. 17.♘d5 It seems like White has nothing better than this, but I believe that if White cannot take with a piece on d5, and he is forced instead to change the structure with exd5, he cannot hope for an advantage. 17...♗xd5 18.exd5 ♖c8 19.c3 with mutual chances. Black might head for a balanced endgame with ♕c4-g4 for instance.

17.f6!!

Opening the h3-c8 diagonal! A series of sacrifices are coming and Black loses because he cannot defend the d7 square.

17...♘xf6 18.♖xf6!

Eliminating the defender of the d7 weakness!

18...gxf6 19.♗b6!

Deflecting the other protector of the d7 pawn. ♗h6 is not a check anymore thanks to 16.♔b1. Black has nothing better than

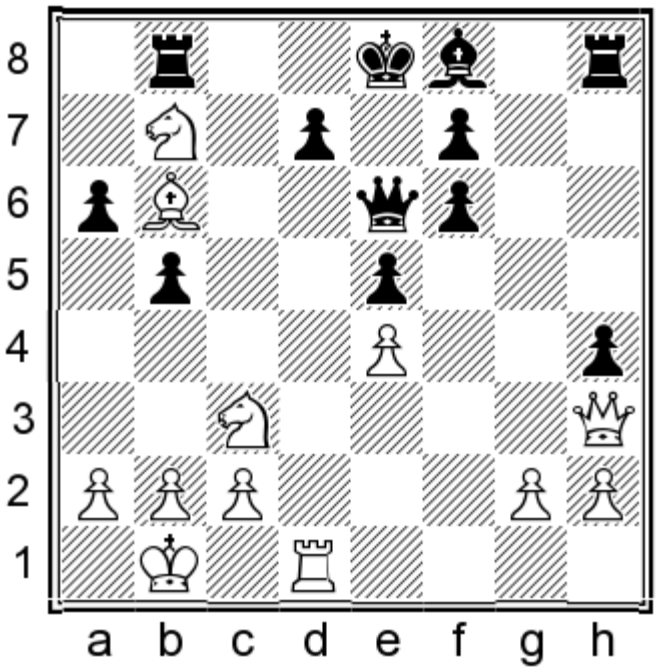
19...♕c6 20.♘a5!

The hunt of the queen continues! The d7 square is still the key!

20...♕e6 21.♘xb7

White has won material, gaining two pieces for the sacrificed rook, and all his pieces are standing very well. The knight will soon come to d5 with decisive threats. Black must try to win back the material with ♖b8, otherwise he is lost.

21...♖b8

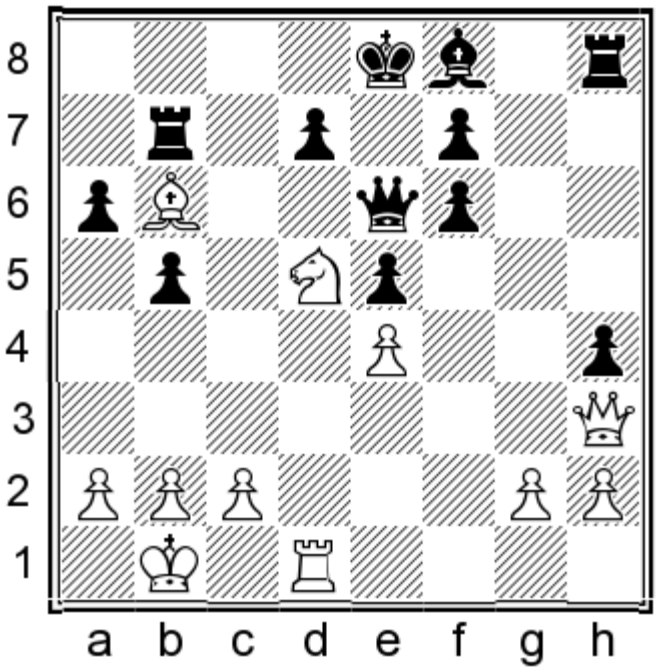


If Black includes the trade of the queens 21...♕xh3 22.gxh3 ♖b8 then 23.♘d6+! saves the piece and guarantees a winning endgame. 23...♗xd6 24.♖xd6+-

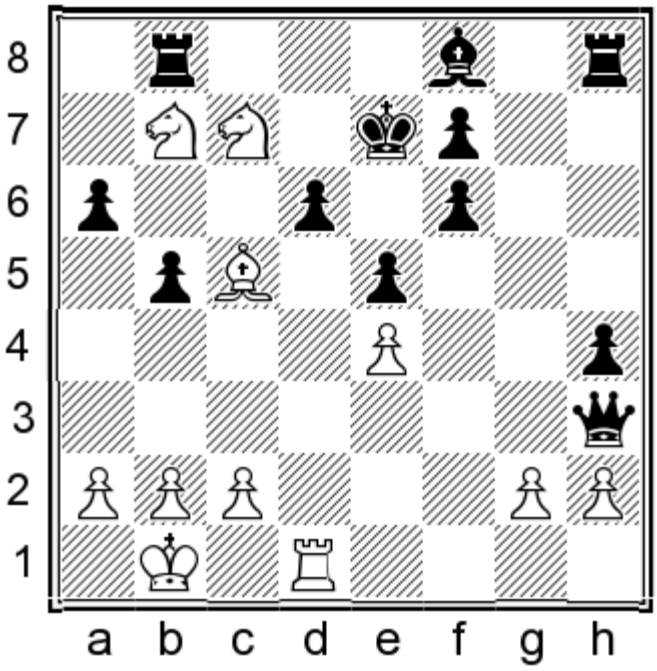
22.♘d5!

This is the only way to victory!

22...♖xb7



Black loses in a beautiful way after 22...♕xh3 23.♘c7+! ♔e7 White could give a perpetual check with ♘d5-c7, but he can play for more with 24.♗c5+! d6



25.♖xd6!! As simple as that! Black is more than a queen up, but he cannot avoid getting mated! 25...f5 trying to open an escape route to f6 does not change anything...

(*25...♖xb7 26.♖d1#* is quite a pretty mate!)

26.♘d5+ ♔e8 27.♘f6+ ♔e7 28.♖c6# Another awesome mate!

23.♕c3!

The only move to win again! White switches his queen to the queenside and creates the decisive threat of ♕c8.

23...♕c6

Other moves are also losing quickly:

23...♖b8 24.♘c7++-;

23...d6 24.♕c6+ ♕d7

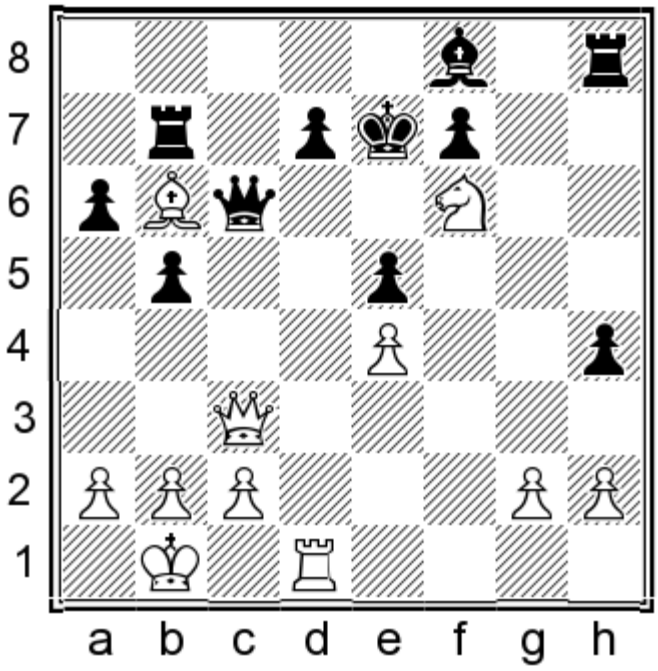
(*24...♖d7 25.♕c8++-*)

25.♘xf6++-

24.♘xf6+!

The fireworks continue!

24...♔e7



24...♕xf6 25.♕c8+ ♔e7 26.♗c5+ d6 27.♕xb7+ ♔e8 28.♕c6++- and mate is coming in a few moves.

25.♗d8+!

Not the only, but certainly the most spectacular win!

25...♔e6

25...♔xd8 26.♕xc6+-

26.♕h3#!

Mate! What a game! It will be very interesting to see Wei Yi participating in the A-group next year!

1–0

GAME 41
M. Adams (2745)
A. Giri (2790)
Vugar Gashimov Mem 2015 Shamkir AZE (8.5)
25.04.2015, [B91]
Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

Neither Adams nor Giri had a great run in Shamkir, and at the end of the event they managed to score “only” 3.5/9, but in the current game Adams- who is usually a very solid player- showed great attacking chess. After the opening it seemed like White’s position was a bit better, but by playing a bit “too slowly” Adams gave Giri excellent chances to turn the game around, but Giri didnt take them and came under a very heavy attack...

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6

I guess this was a little surprise for Adams, since Giri usually plays 2...e6.

3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6

So we have one more Najdorf.

6.g3

This is a move that is becoming more and more fashionable.

6...e6

The main move is 6...e5.

7.♗g2 ♗e7 8.0-0 0-0 9.a4

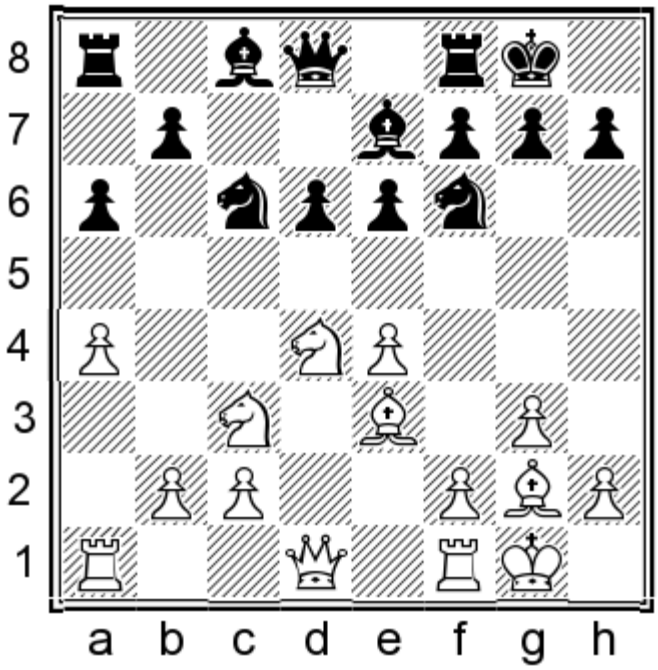
White’s whole idea is to play a Sheveningen, where he usually plays ♗e2-♗f3-g4-♗g2, but now the bishop is already on g2 so he could be a sort of tempo up.

9...♘c6

A rather usual setup for Black.

10.♗e3

Also a normal move for White.



Of course Black should not be afraid of 10.♘xc6 bxc6 11.e5 dxe5 12.♗xc6 ♖b8 and Black has excellent play.

10...♖b8

I am not sure about this move at all. Black's idea is to take on d4 and to play b5, but it leads to a worse position. 10...♘e5 11.♕e2 ♕c7 looks more natural to me.

11.f4

Now White is already preparing to take on c6 and play e5 at some point.

11...♕c7

A very usual move for Black.

12.♔h1

This prophylactic move is often played in Sicilian positions, but is it really needed now?! I think White's idea should be to play g4 and for that maybe the position of the white king on g1 is even better. The immediate 12.g4 didn't work because after 12...♘xd4 13.♗xd4 e5 the g4 pawn is lost. In my opinion the correct move was 12.♘b3 followed by g4.

12...♗d7 13.♘b3

White is preparing the a5 move and the g4 push.

13...b6

directed against White's a5 push. 13...♘b4 14.a5 e5 15.♗b6 ♕c8 16.f5 and White is very solid in the center. 13...b5 was also premature. 14.axb5 axb5 and White has the strong 15.♕e2! Black has huge problems in defending the b5 pawn.

14.g4

Of course! White is starting his action on the kingside.

14...h6

A strong reply. Black can’t let White play g5 followed by f5.

15.♕e2

attacking the a6 pawn and maybe preparing to play g5 sometime in the future. Now we can see that perhaps playing ♖b8 was not the best idea.

15...♘b4

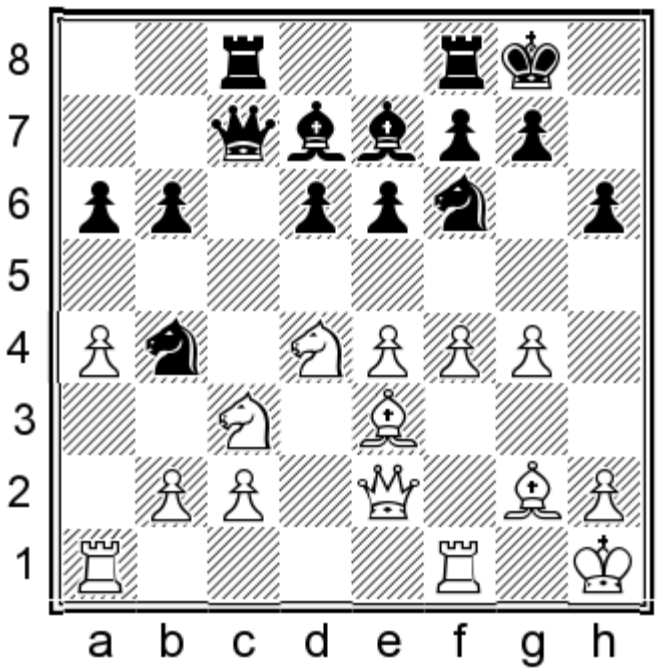
A slightly strange move, as it is hard to understand where the black knight is going... Why not play 15...♘a5, which is a typical move in this kind of pawn structures? 16.g5 hxg5 17.fxg5 ♘h7 18.h4 ♘c4 and in my opinion the position is very unclear.

16.♘d4

I think white should have played more directly with 16.g5 hxg5 17.fxg5 ♘h7 18.h4 and because of the passive position of the knight on h7 I believe that White is better.

16...♖bc8

Black is preparing to play ♕c4, as the endgames are usually good for Black.



17.♖ad1?!

and this move is already too slow. It was really time for White to play 17.g5 hxg5 18.fxg5 ♘h7 19.h4

17...♕c4 18.♕f3

Of course White avoids the endgame, but now Black has a sudden, unexpected resource:

18...e5!

A strong reply by Giri. A move like e5 is usually a bad move since it gives away the f5 and d5 squares, but in the current situation it is the right choice.

19.♘f5 ♗xf5 20.exf5

Freeing the bishop from g2.

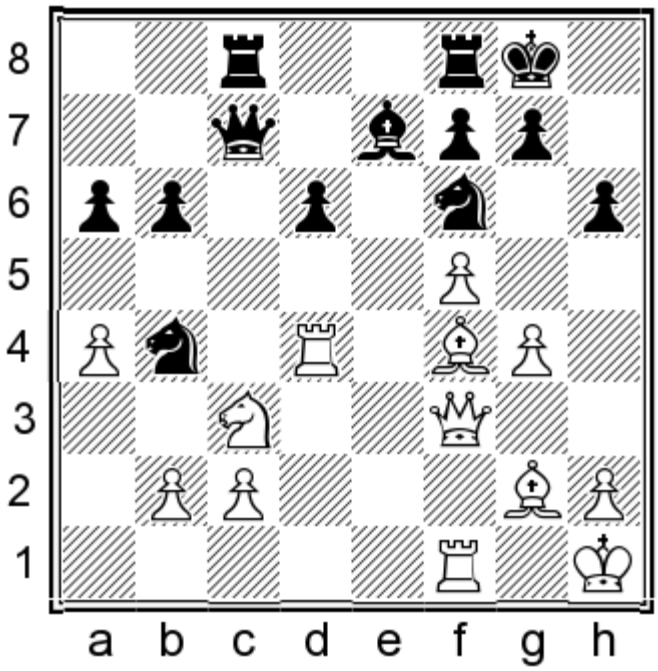
20...exf4

Taking the pawn on c2 looks very dangerous: 20...♘xc2 21.g5 and White's attack is just too strong.

21.♖d4

After 21.♗xf4 d5 the position looks very unclear to me.

21...♕c7 22.♗xf4



22...♘xc2?

A clear mistake, but even from a human point of view it is hard to see the full danger of White's attack. Black should have tried to play for the d5 push, which is very typical. 22...♕c5 23.♖d2 d5 and the position is very unclear.

23.♖d2 ♘b4

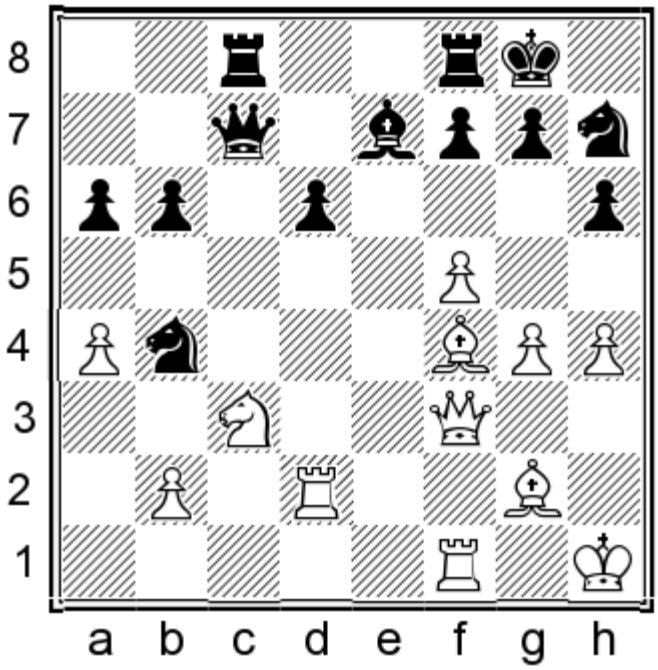
It seems as though Black is a pawn up, but in fact it is White who rules the game.

24.h4!

A great move! Black has no decent defense against g5.

24...♘h7

I guess Giri clearly underestimated Adams' next move.



25.g5!

The right move since Black can't take the g5 pawn.

25...♕c4

Not a great move, but what else to do?! In case of 25...hxg5 26.hxg5 ♘xg5 27.♕g3 ♘h7 White has a very simple win: 28.♗f3! activating both rooks and threatening to play ♖g1–♖h2 with a deadly mating attack.

26.f6

Adams is on fire! Black's position is getting destroyed.

26...gxf6 27.gxf6

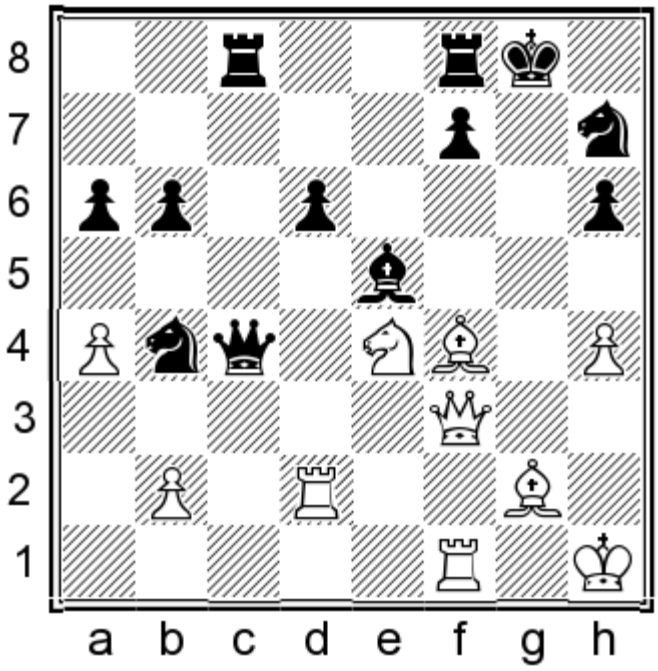
A logical move but maybe not the simplest one. White would win very easily after 27.gxh6 ♔h8 28.♖e1! attacking the e7 bishop. 28...♖fe8 29.♖e4 ♕c5 30.♗e3 ♕a5 31.♗d4 Finishing the game on the spot! White has too many threats — like ♖xe7 — for Black to even have a chance of saving the game.

27...♗xf6 28.♘e4

White's play is simple; he brings all the pieces to the kingside and mates the black king.

28...♗e5

There was already no way for Black to save the game.



29.♖xd6!

Another superb move by Adams!

29...♗g7

After 29...♗xd6 30.♘xd6 ♕c2 31.♗xh6 Black’s position is also in ruins.

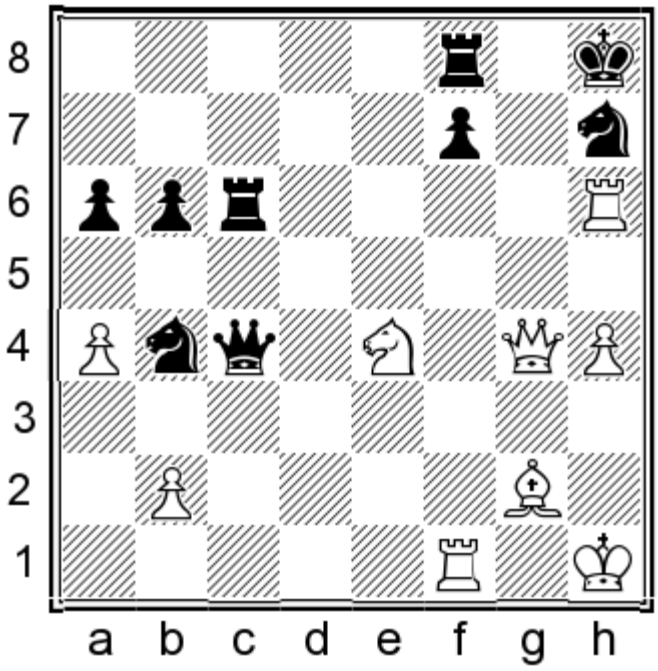
30.♗xh6

It is time to collect some more material and to get rid of the lonely defender of the black king.

30...♗xh6 31.♖xh6

The game is totally over.

31...♖c6 32.♕g4+ ♔h8



33.♖xh7+

and now after 33...♔xh7 34.♘f6 ♖xf6 35.♕c4 White would be a queen up. A very nice game by Adams where Black basically lost the game in one move by not playing 22...d5! instead being a bit greedy by going for the c2 pawn.

1–0

GAME 42
V. Anand (2804)
M. Vachier-Lagrave (2723)
3rd Norway Chess 2015 Stavanger NOR (6.2)
22.06.2015, [B90]
Annotated by Balogh Csaba

Anand wins the next game with a brilliant combination, which is too hard even for the engines!

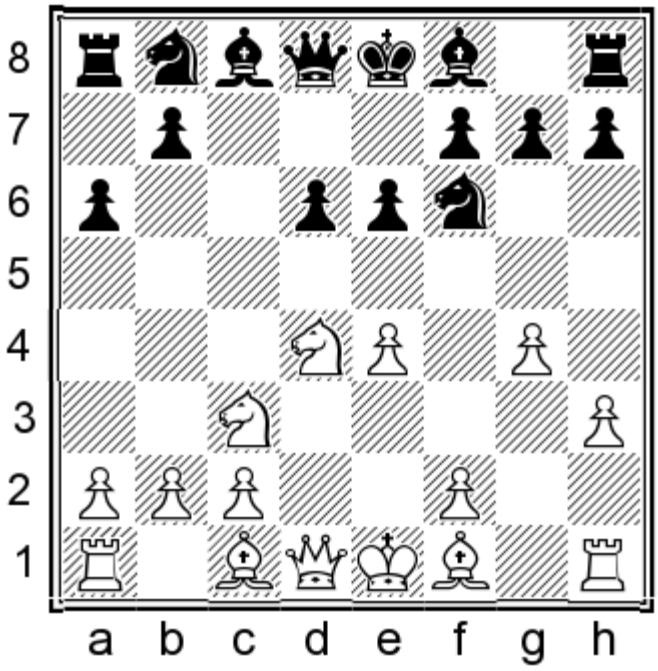
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6

Vachier Lagrave plays his favorite Sicilian Najdorf variation and Anand replies with one of the most fashionable answers...

6.h3 e6

This probably came as a surprise. The Frenchman usually plays 6...e5 — a few rounds before the current game he chose that option against Caruana.

7.g4



7...h6

The game has transposed now to the Sicilian Keres Attack variation, which was considered to be better for White, but of course the newest engines are showing good and playable options for Black here as well.

8.♗g2 ♘c6 9.♗e3

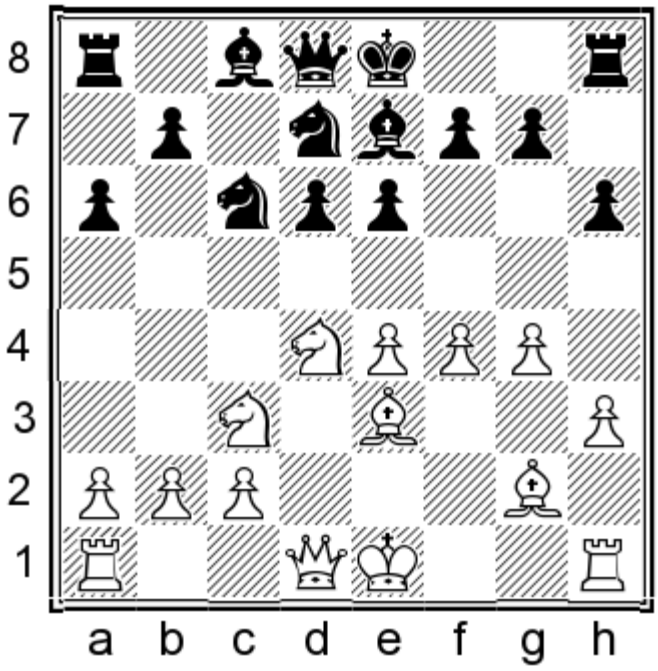
White usually aims for castling queenside in this line (after ♕e2), but Black manages to avoid this idea. 9.♘xc6 bxc6 10.e5 seems to create direct problems, but Black has 10...♘d5! and he is fine.

9...♗e7 10.f4

Intending ♕e2 and 0-0-0. After the direct 10.♕e2 Black arrives quickly with his typical counterplay 10...♘xd4 11.♗xd4 e5! This is the reason why White usually starts with 10.f4. 12.♗e3 ♗e6 13.0-0-0 ♖c8∞ Preparing for the standard Sicilian exchange sacrifice on c3, or just playing ♕a5 increasing the attacking chances.

10...♘d7!

This is the point behind Black's play. White does not have enough time for playing ♕e2 or ♕d2 because of the unpleasant check on h4! White therefore castles kingside, but this lends a different character to the game.



11.0-0

We could say that it is risky to castle in this direction having advanced all the pawns in front of the king, however the black king cannot stay for long in the center either, and castling queenside is even more dangerous. Therefore he will castle kingside as well, but then the advance of the kingside pawns provide attacking potential, rather than weakening the king.

11...♘xd4

Black needs to exchange the knights in order to fianchetto his bishop to b7. If Black starts via the other move order, 11...0-0, Vachier Lagrave most probably wanted to avoid the new direction of some games — which continued with 12.♘ce2!? — and White could recapture with the knight on d4.

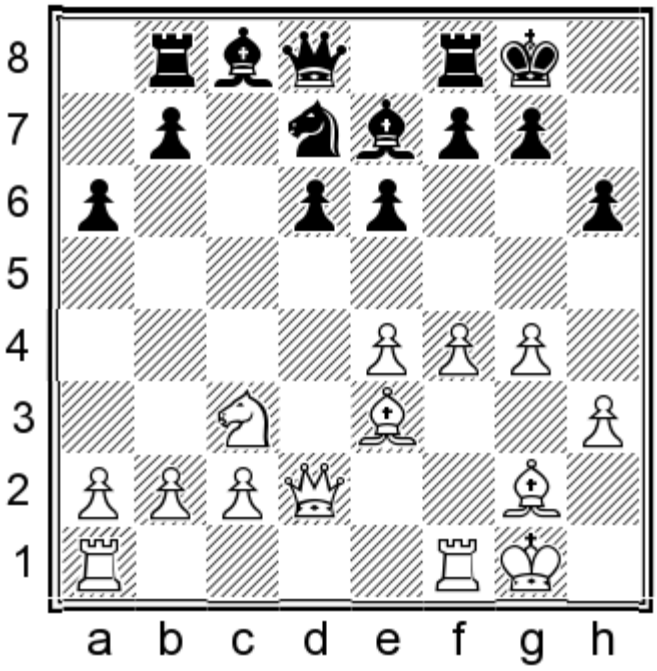
12.♕xd4 0-0

Black had to waste a tempo on protecting the g7 pawn.

13.♕d2!

Another strong prophylactic move aimed against b5 and White also retreats his queen from the center to escape from all manner of attacks. Probably Anand was already thinking about the sacrifices on h6, which later decided the game in his favor. Now on ...b5, White could push e5, because he has removed himself from the dxe5 tempo when the queen was standing on d4.

13...♖b8



Black is finally able to push b5. All these moves are typical to many Sicilian lines. Another known idea in such positions is to regroup the bishop to d4 by including the ♗a7-♖a8 pair of moves. However, the bishop stands better now on e3 because it is ready for the sacrifices on h6 and it does not stand in the way of the e5 tempo gain, following which black could win the dark squares for his minor pieces.

14.♘e2 b5 15.♖ad1!

Anand brings all his pieces to the party. Who could guess that this rook on d1 will very soon decide the outcome of the game?!

15...♕c7

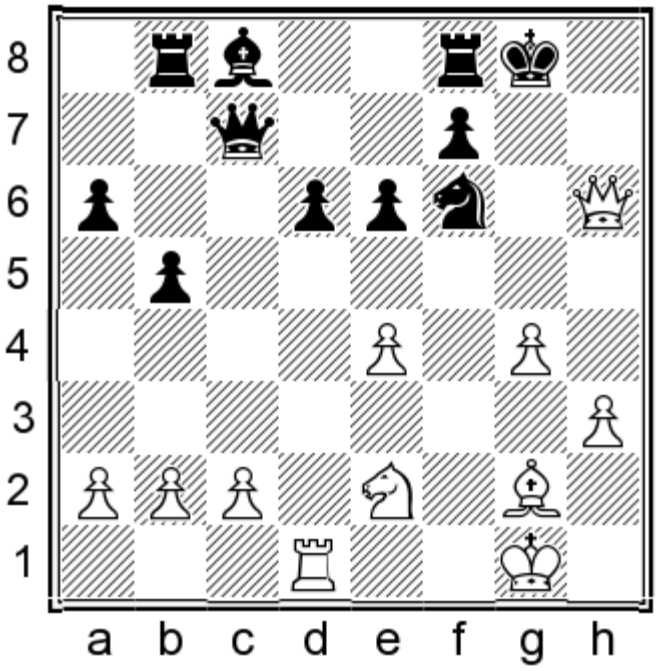
A known idea in the Sicilian family, in that Black retains his bishop on c8 to keep his e6 pawn and the d7 knight protected. In the case of 15...♗b7, White could either try e5 (using the fact that the d7 knight is not protected) or push f5 followed by putting pressure on the e6 pawn with ♘f4.

16.f5

White reveals his cards about sacrificing on h6, but Black does not believe in it and completely ignores it. At the beginning correctly, however...

16...♘f6 17.♘g3

White brings up another attacker. After taking twice on h6, White might threaten with g5 and ♘h5. The direct 17.♗xh6 only leads to a draw 17...gxh6 18.♕xh6 Black has other moves as well, but the most forcing one is 18...♘h7 Black wants to play ♗g5, therefore the only move is 19.f6! ♗xf6 20.♖xf6 ♘xf6



21.♕g5+!

(Black defends succesfully after *21.*♕*xf6* ♕*c5+ 22.*♔*h1* ♕*e5!*)

21...♔h7 22.♕h4+ with a draw by perpetual check since ...♔g6? does not work in view of ♘f4! 22...♔g7 23.♕g5.

17...♗b7

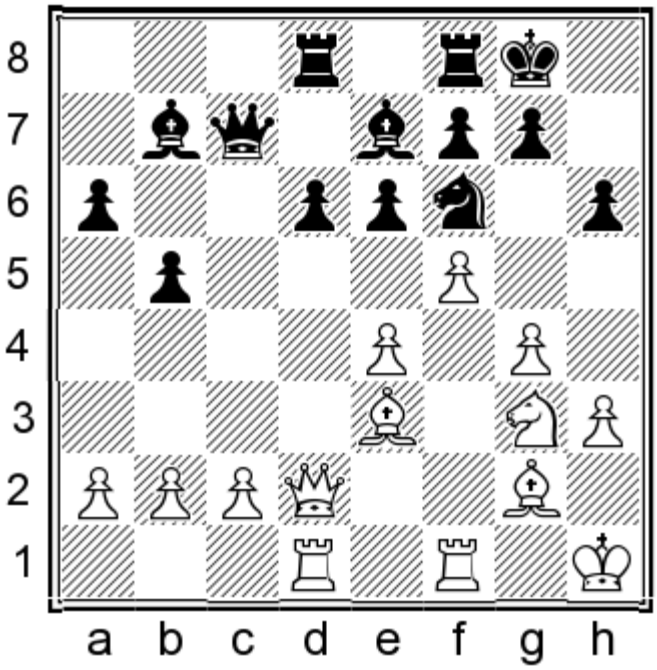
Trying to use the x-ray on the g3 knight with 17...d5? runs into 18.e5! ♕xe5 19.♗f4 and the b8 rook falls.

18.♔h1

The final preparation for the sacrifice! White removes himself from the potential checks on the dark squares. The immediate 18.♗xh6 shows perfectly, why 18.♔h1 is so useful 18...gxh6 19.♕xh6 White is again threatening g5 and ♘h5. The only move is 19...d5! and the brilliant tactics played in the game only lead to draws now. 20.g5 ♕xg3 21.♖d3 Black has some other options too, but the easiest is 21...♗c5+ 22.♔h1 ♘xe4 23.♖xg3 ♘xg3+ 24.♔h2 ♗d6 and White must allow perpetual check... 25.♔g1 ♗c5+ 26.♔h2=

18...♖bd8?

Black still ignores the sacrifice, but this time he should not have done so. His plan was to push d5 and he also escaped from the motif of e5 ♕xe5 ♗f4 and the rook hanging on b8.



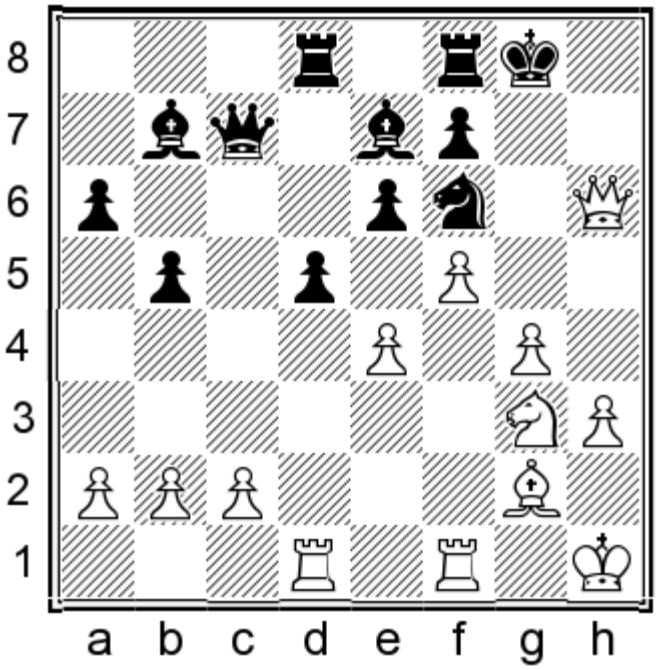
But he should have strengthened his kingside with 18...♔h7! when it is not obvious how White should progress the attack. On the other hand, Black is ready with ♖ad8 and d5!

19.♗xh6!

The sacrifice suggests itself as White has based all of his moves on this idea, but the follow-up is extremely difficult to find and to calculate beforehand...

19...gxh6 20.♕xh6 d5!

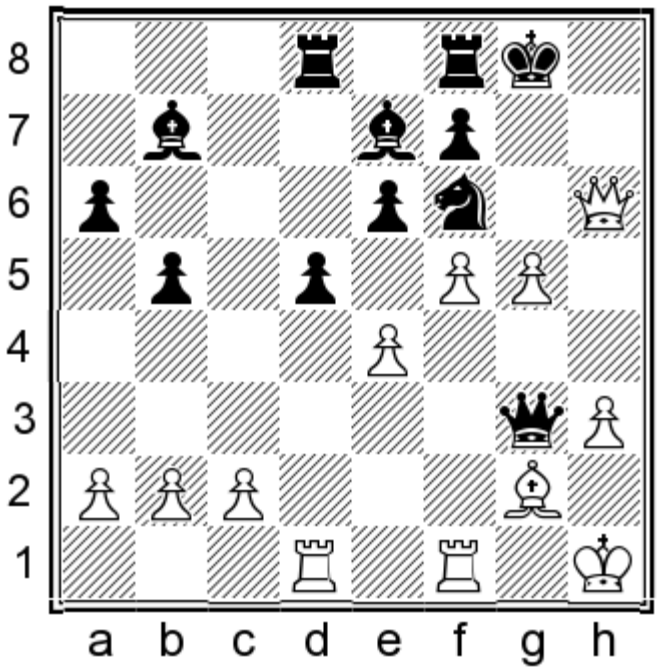
Black thought that the sacrifice wass unsound as he has the usual central break and White will have nothing more than perpetual check. However, Anand has prepared a deep surprise...



21.g5!!

The second blow, but it all fails without the next move. Perhaps, Vachier Lagrave expected 21.e5 ♕xe5 22.♕g5+ ♔h8 23.♕h4+ when the draw is inevitable with 23...♔g8 (*23...♘h7* loses to *24.♕xe7 ♕xg3 25.♕xb7+*-) 24.♕g5

21...♕xg3

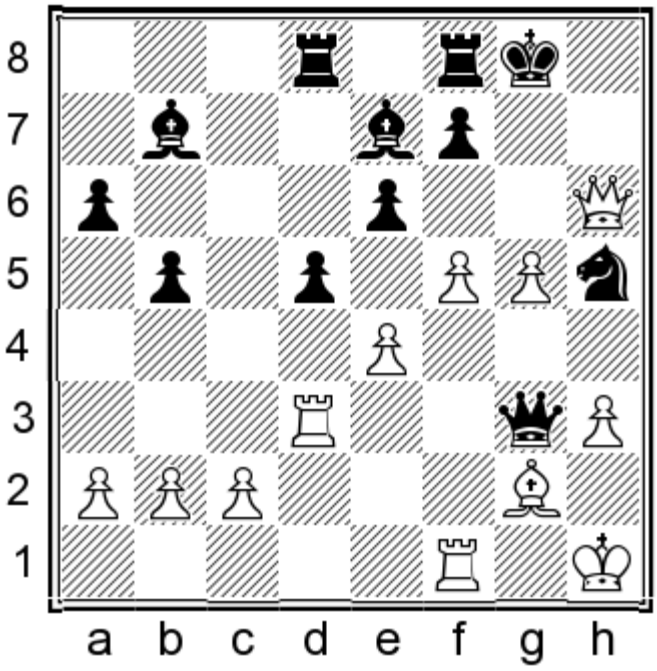


22.♖d3!!

Black is two pieces up, but this intermediate move kills all his hopes. The point is to force the queen to the wrong place before taking on f6. On the direct 22.gxf6 then ♗d6 wins for Black as he mates on h2 and at the same time the queen covers the g7 square...

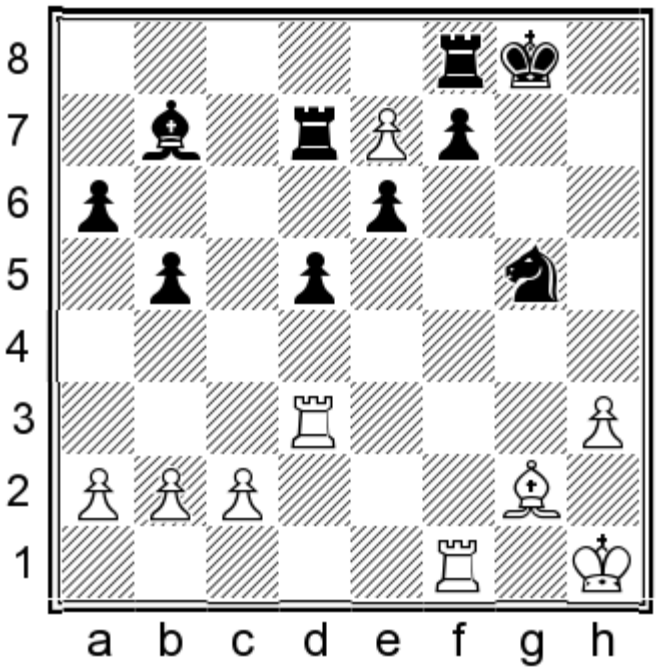
22...♘h5?

Black misses the final point!



The only move was 22...♘xe4! White must continue his extremely powerful play with 23.f6! ♗xf6

(Another key line is *23...♕xg5 24.♕xg5+ ♘xg5 25.fxe7 ♖d7*



26.♖g3!!

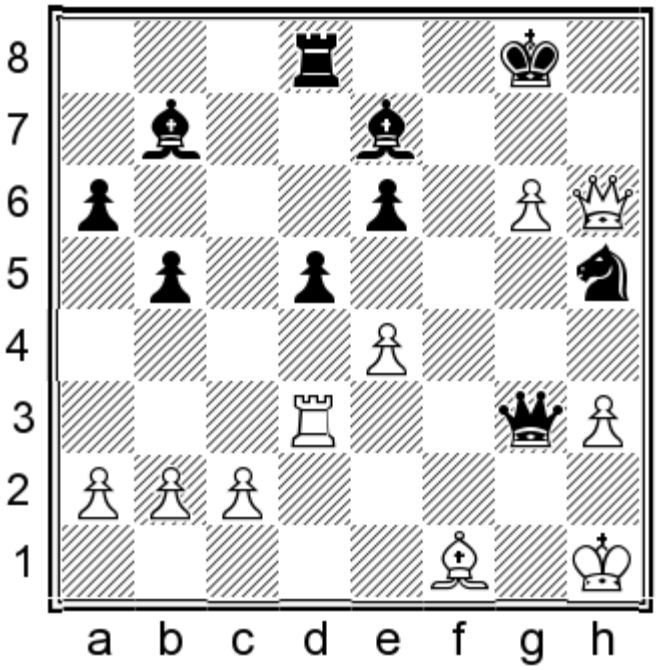
Taking on f8 would remove the king from the danger zone and Black could get strong compensation for the exchange. However now he gets mated... *26...♖xe7 27.♖xg5+ ♔h8 28.♖f6!* Driving the king to wrong square to avoid the defense of f5-♖h7... *28...♔h7 29.♖f4! ♔h6 30.♖g3!* Temporarily retreating, but soon mate is coming... *30...♔h5 31.♗f3+ ♔h6 32.♖h4#*)

24.♗xe4! dxe4 25.♖xg3 ♗g7 26.♕h4 e3+ 27.♔g1 e2 28.♖e1+- Black only has two bishops for the queen, which is clearly not enough compensation. 22...♕e5 loses to 23.gxf6 ♗xf6 24.♖f4! ♗g7 25.♖g3+- because all the heavy pieces are in the attack.

23.g6!!

The only winning move, which was most probably missed by Black! 23.♖xg3 leads to a draw after 23...♘xg3+ 24.♔h2 ♗d6 25.♔g1 ♗c5

23...fxg6 24.fxg6 ♖xf1+ 25.♗xf1



And Black has no defense against the threatened mates after ♕h7. He must give up his queen for free...

25...♘f6

25...♕f4 26.♕h7+ ♔f8 27.♕h8#;

25...♕e5 26.♕h7+ ♔f8 27.♕f7#

26.♖xg3

The game is over! Black continues resisting for a few more moves.

26...dxe4 27.♗e2 e3+ 28.♔g1 ♗c5 29.♔f1

A beautiful and very long combination by Anand!

1–0

GAME 43
W. So (2778)
A. Naiditsch (2722)
43rd GM 2015 Dortmund GER (3.3)
30.06.2015, [D37]
Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

We are in the 3rd round of the traditional tournament “Dortmunder Schachtage” and as usual the tournament has a great and interesting line-up. For me it was my first game against the very talented young player from the Philipines, who changed his federation to American and is already in the Top 10. I have to say that to play against Wesley is anything but pleasant. He bangs the clock, coughs non-stop and plays the moves instantly without writing the move of the opponent down. Well, a lot of young players behave very badly at the board these days and I am sure that the incident of Wesley So during the US Championship where he got a 0 for writing strange things on his scoresheet will not be the last time he breaks the ethics and rules of chess.

1.d4

It is not easy to guess the first move of So, since he plays everything.

1...♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 ♘bd7

In my first round game against Kramnik I chose to play my favorit 4...c5 Tarrasch, but I had a strong feeling that something unpleasant was waiting for me there, so I switched to the Queens Gambit.

5.e3

Clearly not the most ambitious, but a very possible way of playing. The main move at the moment is 5.♗f4.

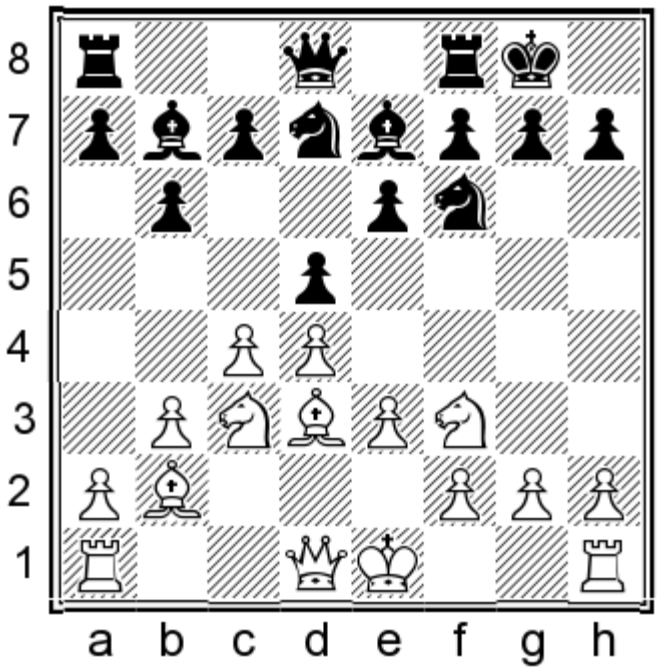
5...♗e7

There are also a lot of different possiblities to develop Black’s pieces, but I usually like a solid setup in the opening.

6.b3

Now that the bishop can’t get to f4 or g5, of course White develops it to b2.

6...0-0 7.♗b2 b6 8.♗d3 ♗b7



9.♕c2!

A well-known move, but it is still important to know this. White doesn't take too early with cxd5 because of ♘xd5, and with the move ♕c2 now ♘xd5 will no longer be possible because the h7 pawn is hanging.

9...c5

To continue with 9...dxc4 10.bxc4 c5 11.d5 usually leads to a better position for White.

10.cxd5 exd5

I am forced to recapture exd5 and now my bishop on b7 looks a bit "stupid".

11.0-0 a6

Before playing 11...a6 I thought for a long time. There are a lot of different setups for the black pieces and I needed to choose one. If I was Peter Leko I would definitely go for 11...cxd4 12.♘xd4 g6 and try to hold this very safe but clearly worse position.

12.♖fd1 ♖e8

I wanted to put my bishop on d6, but I need to be careful about White's e4 push first. So 12...♗d6 seems premature since after 13.e4! it is clearly White who will benefit from the open center.

13.♖ac1 ♗d6 14.♗f5

An interesting try. It would have been more usual for White to play 14.♘e2 ♕e7 15.♘g3 White wants to enter the f5 square. 15...g6 Of course the a1–h8 diagonal is a bit opened, but Black's position also has its pluses. Things are very complicated here.

14...♖c8

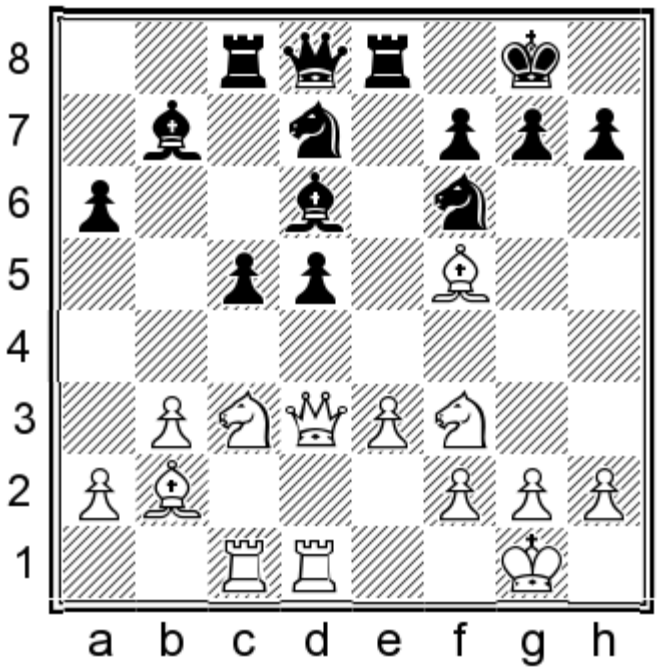
I continue playing very safe moves and develop my pieces.

15.dxc5

Usually White should not give up the center without a concrete idea, but maybe So was afraid of my c4 push next. A very typical move for White would have been 15.♕b1 and now I need to decide whether to play something "normal" like 15...♖c7 or to try and enter the complications of 15...c4 16.bxc4 dxc4 17.e4 where it is very difficult to evaluate this crazy position! (*17.d5 g6*)

15...bxc5 16.♕d3

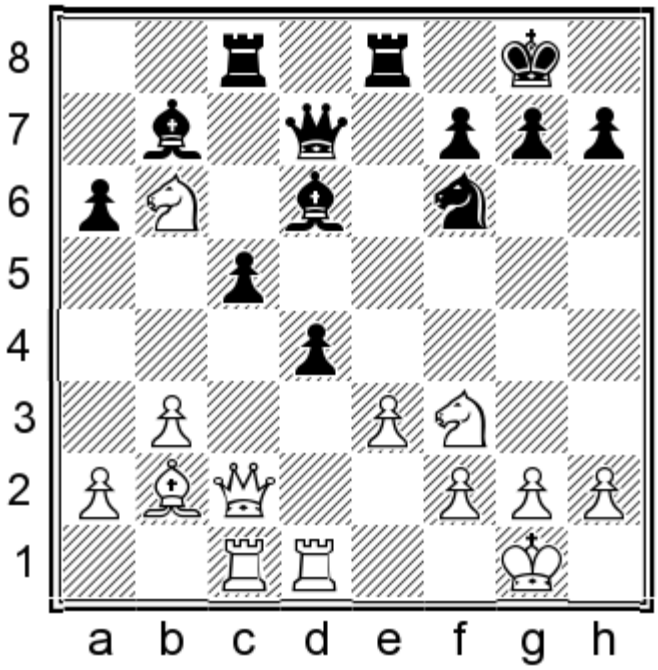
So far my opponent was playing very quickly.



16.♗xd7 is of course not dangerous for Black. 16...♕xd7 17.♘a4 d4

(*17...♕e7* is good as well.)

18.♘b6 and here comes the very beautiful blow which I saw during the game:



18...♗xh2+! 19.♘xh2 ♕c6 and Black is better.

16...♖c7

I continue playing things safe.

17.♘a4

To play with or against hanging central pawns is always a very difficult task. Both sides have a lot of ideas and a lot of

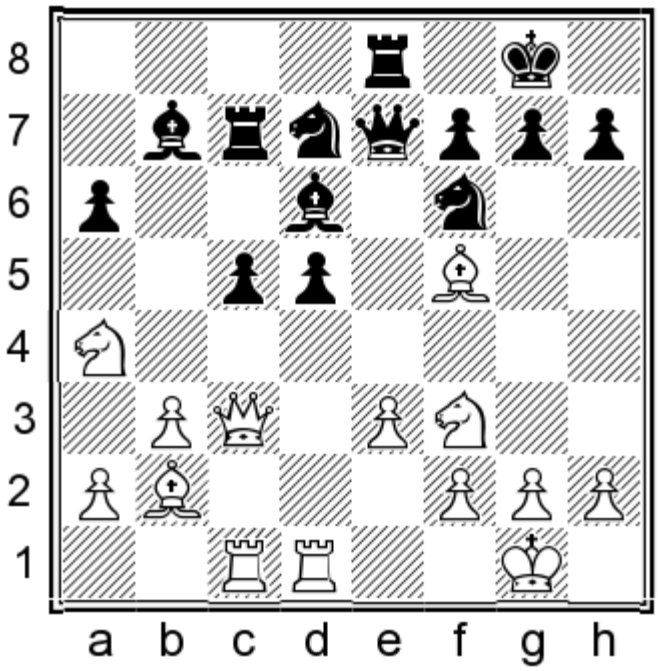
tactical motifs which always need to be taken into account.

17...♕e7

I have managed to protect my center which is very good news.

18.♕c3

Another move which was played very quickly by So. It is logical to bring the queen to a5, but to play such a move without spending at least a bit of time calculating the resources of your opponent?!



Maybe White should have continued with a prophylactic move such as 18.h3 but I think it is already Black who has hopes of obtaining a better position. 18...g6 19.♗xd7 ♘xd7 and I think the position is about dynamically equal.

18...d4!

A very strong move which completely turns the game around.

19.exd4 ♗xf3

I was playing against the weak back rank. 19...♘d5 would also lead to a very unclear position. 20.♕e1 ♕d8 21.♕f1 ♘f4 and I was totally unsure during the game about who was actually better here.

20.♕xf3 cxd4

This was my idea. Of course White has the bishop pair, but the 1st rank is very weak and the knight on a4 is totally out of the game.

21.♖a1?

A really shocking reply! 21.g3 would lead to a normal position. 21...♘e5 22.♕g2 ♖xc1 23.♗xc1 g6 24.♗b1 and maybe Black is only a tiny bit better after 24...♗b8 with the idea of putting a lot of pressure on the f2 pawn by playing ♗a7. White's problem of the horrible position of the knight on a4 is still unsolved. Of course White can't exchange the rooks

because of the mate: 21.♖xc7 ♕e1+ 22.♖xe1 ♖xe1#

21...♘e5

The black pieces keep on coming!

22.♕h3

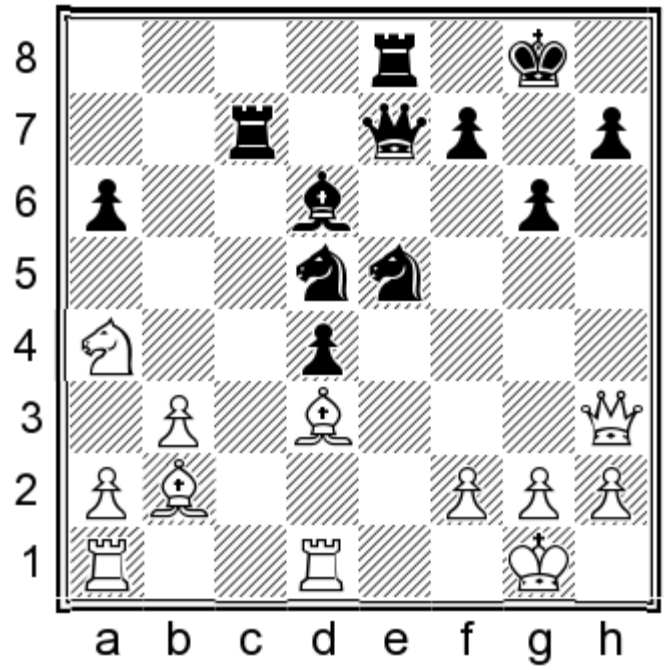
White's position is already extremely difficult.

22...g6 23.♗d3

Here, because I had spent of a lot of time thinking between moves 12-20, I had only 20 minutes left on the clock and So about an hour, but what really surprised me during the game was that he was always playing his move instantly, without even writing down my move. Well, in any case it did not go too well for him...

23...♘d5

White is in huge danger.



24.♗xd4?

Another bad move by White... 24.♗f1 ♘f4 25.♕g3 White's position looks lost, but it is still playable. 25...♘ed3 26.♕f3 with a big advantage for Black, but nothing too dramatic has happened.

24...♘xd3

Because I didn't have too much time left, I played this move quickly and missed a direct win. 24...♘f4 25.♕h6 and now comes the move that I missed: 25...♕f6!! with the idea of playing ♗f8 next, catching the white queen. Just beautiful!

25.♕xd3 ♘f4 26.♕xa6?

and this move simply loses on the spot in many different ways. White's best chance was 26.♕f3 ♘e2+ 27.♔f1 and now

Black has a few options, but the most simple one is 27...♘xd4 28.♖xd4 ♗e5 29.♖e4 ♗xa1 30.♖xe7 ♖c1+ 31.♔e2 ♖xe7+ and White's position should be close to lost with such an open king and the knight on a4.

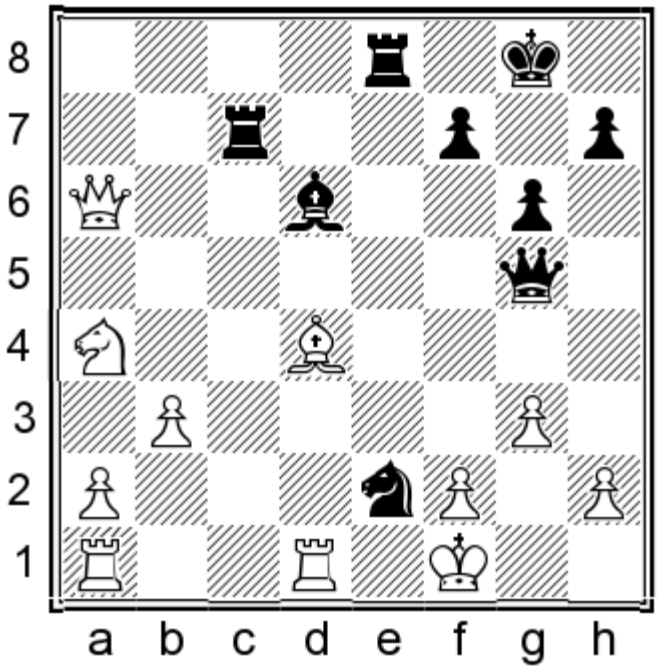
26...♕g5

A safe move. Another easy win was available with 26...♘e2+ 27.♔f1 ♘xd4 28.♖xd4 ♖c2 and White is totally lost. 29.♖xd6 ♕h4! with the double threat of taking on h2 and f2. The game is over.

27.g3

In the event of 27.♕f1 ♘e2+ 28.♔h1 Black is winning after 28...♗xh2! 29.♔xh2 ♕h4#

27...♘e2+ 28.♔f1



28...♕g4

I had another 5 different moves to end the game as well. My threat is simple, to play ♕h3 next.

29.♗e3 ♖xe3

29...♕f3 may have been a bit more accurate.

30.♕a8+ ♔g7 31.♖xd6

White can't take the rook: 31.fxe3 ♖c2! All the black pieces are attacking the lonely white king. 32.♕g2 ♕f5+ 33.♔e1 ♗b4+ and Black will deliver mate during the next few moves.

31...♖e4

Safe and solid. Now the white king is fighting alone against the whole black army!

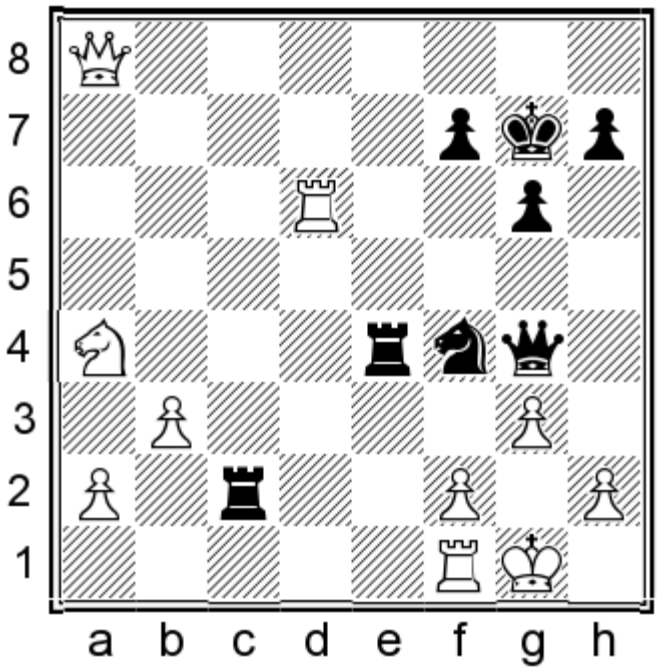
32.♔g2 ♘f4+ 33.♔g1 ♘h3+ 34.♔g2 ♖c2

The f2 pawn is going to fall.

35.♖f1 ♘f4+

Of course many other options would have been good enough, but this is a pretty one.

36.♔g1



36...♕f3

and after 37.gxf4 I have 37...♖xf2 38.♖xf2 and ♖e1. I was very happy after the game to beat a Top 10 player with Black with such a nice mating attack.

0–1

GAME 44
Yi Wei (2724)
L. Bruzon Batista (2669)
6th Hainan Danzhou GM Danzhou CHN (2.4)
03.07.2015, [B40]
Annotated by Balogh Csaba

An immortal game was played by the 16-year old Chinese talent, Wei Yi! Here he crushes his Cuban opponent with some beautiful and shocking sacrifices.

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.♘c3

White chooses this unusual move order before playing the main 3.d4 to avoid some theoretical lines.

3...a6 4.♗e2 ♘c6

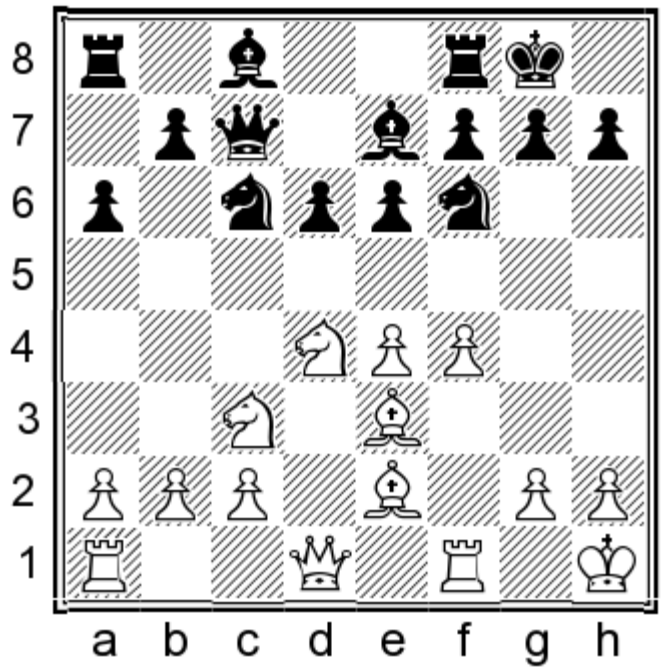
Black is ready to play ♘d4 in case of 5.0-0, therefore there is no time to waste in opening the center.

5.d4 cxd4 6.♘xd4 ♕c7

We have transposed now to the Sicilian Taimanov variation and soon it turns to the Scheveningen variation...

7.0-0 ♘f6 8.♗e3 ♗e7 9.f4 d6 10.♔h1 0-0

The starting position of the Scheveningen.



The old main-line used to be the move 11.♕e1, which appeared in this game. After some time the 11.a4 alternative became the most common line and now in recent years the fashion has come back to the old move thanks to the engines, which have found some very interesting ideas for White.

11.♕e1

White drops his queen to the kingside to obtain different kinds of attacking potential.

11...♘xd4 12.♗xd4 b5

The point of 11.a4 would have been to prevent this typical idea.

13.♕g3 ♗b7

On the direct 13...b4 14.e5! is very strong 14...dxe5 15.♗xe5 and the knight is coming to e4!

14.a3

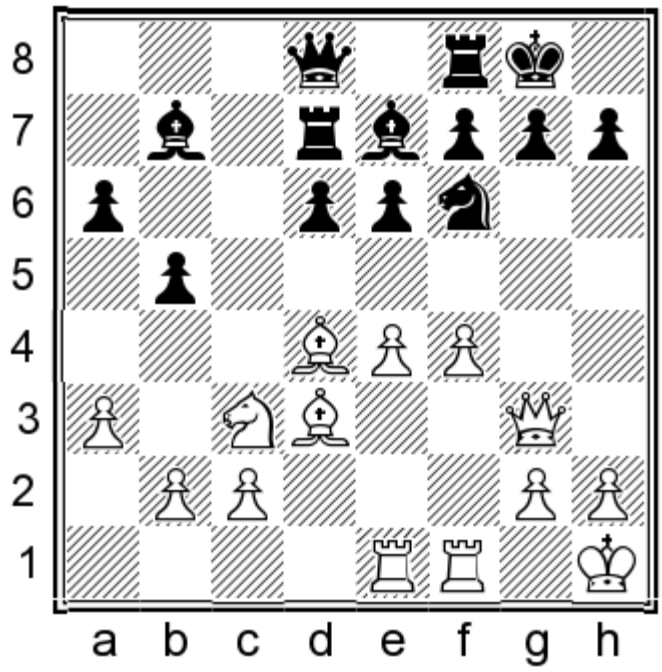
Black has various options here. The latest developments of theory gives at first sight a mysterious plan, and Bruzon follows it...

14...♖ad8 15.♖ae1

White brings all his pieces into the game.

15...♖d7 16.♗d3 ♕d8

A sideline. Black escapes from the e5 dxe5 ♗xe5 tempo.



The most popular move is 16...♖e8 preparing for a counterplay with e5, however the new idea of the computer 17.a4! seems to create some difficulties for Black. Both players were definitely familiar with the new ideas and Bruzon decided to deviate from this line.

17.♕h3!

Using the fact that the queen has moved from c7, when Black could solve his problems with e5 (in the 16...♖e8 line)! White has created the threat of e5 dxe5 fxe5 ♖xd4 exf6 and Black faces problems on the h7 square. Therefore he must ensure the safety of his h7 pawn.

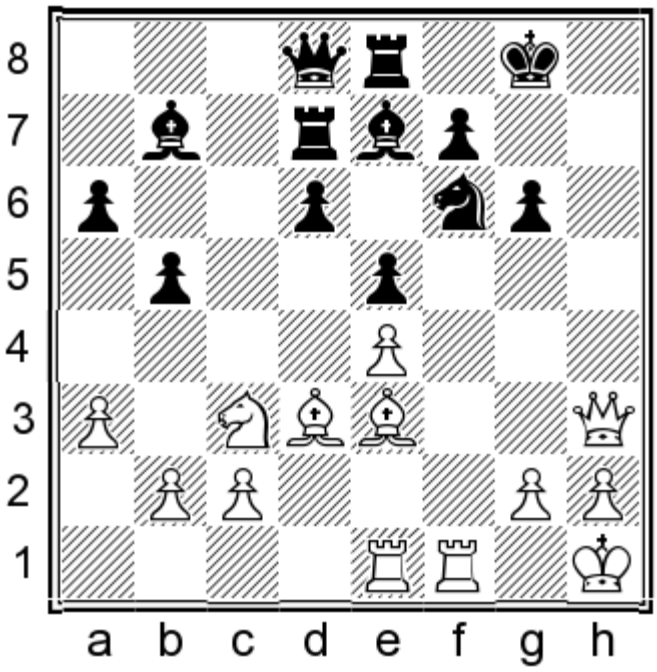
17...g6 18.f5!

The standard drawback to the g6 move: White opens the f-file now. With the pawn on g7 this move is usually not dangerous because of the central break with ...e5, ♗e3 and ...d5, but now ♗h6 or ♗g5 are that much stronger.

18...e5 19.♗e3 ♖e8

We are still following some previous games, but here comes the novelty. Despite the fact that all this could be known from practical games, I believe that Wei Yi finds all the forthcoming brilliant ideas over the board...it is not home preparation!

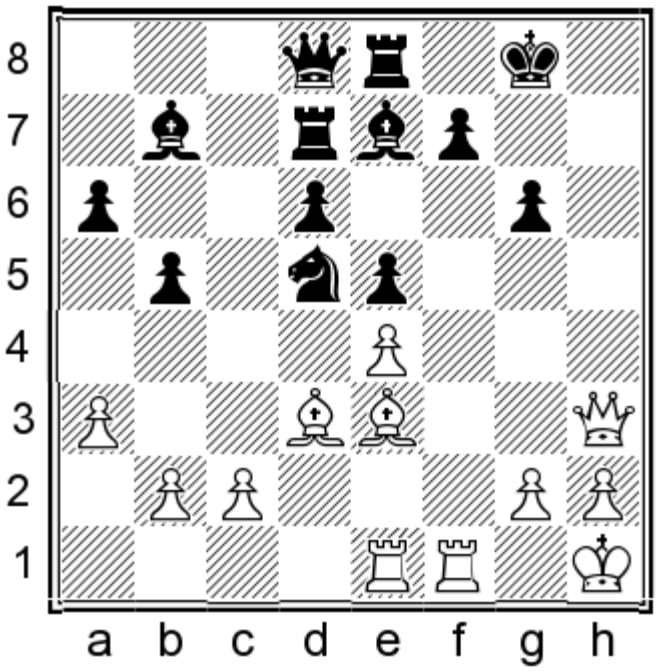
20.fxg6 hxg6



21.♘d5!

Wei Yi starts the fireworks with this move! He has no retreat after this sacrifice, otherwise he is just losing material. He obviously could not calculate all the lines until the end — as it is impossible — so he had to trust his intuition that he would have enough resources to finish the attack after the black king heads towards the center.

21...♘xd5



21...♗xd5 22.exd5 ♘xd5 is much worse. The bishop on d5 could be a much better defender as it protects f7. Now the same tactics work quite smoothly 23.♖xf7! ♔xf7 24.♕h7+ ♔e6 25.♗xg6! White creates many different mating threats. The most important ones are ♕f7 and ♗f5 followed by ♕g6 mate.

(*25.*♕*xg6+?* comes to the mind at first to continue the attack with check, but Black is safe after *25...*♘*f6!*)

Now Black should try to cover the squares on the f-file with 25...♖f8, but it does not help in view of 26.♕h3+! ♔f6 27.♗e4+- and Black has no defense against the mates. ♕h6, ♖f1 or ♕f5-♕g6-♕h7 is a forced mate.

22.♖xf7!!

The point of the previous move! White has deflected the knight from f6 in order to start the hunt of the black king! The only thing which makes the sacrifice easier to execute is the fact that White always has a draw with perpetual check at his disposal, therefore White can go ahead, calculate the lines when they appear on the board and in the worst case scenario that he does not see anything — just make a draw.. But, of course, the main goal is to mate the black king.

22...♔xf7 23.♕h7+ ♔e6

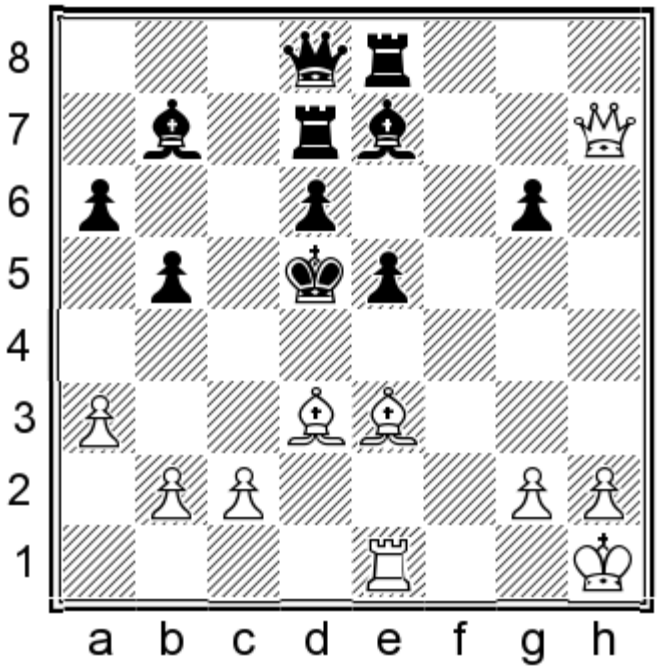
Here is a moment where White could force a draw with 24.♕h3, but Wei Yi thinks much deeper and continues searching for mate.

24.exd5+!

White gains back some material and eliminates the knight which could have become an important defender if it returned to f6.

24...♔xd5

Black tries to run away with his king to c6-c7.



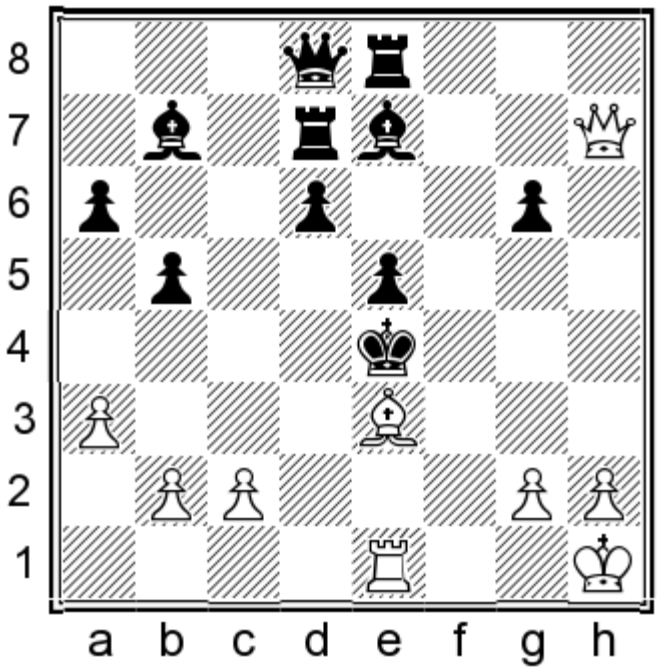
24...♗xd5 is similar to the 21...♗xd5 line. White must be very precise with 25.♗xg6! (*25.*♕*xg6+?* is not enough again *25...*♗*f6 26.*♗*f5+* ♔*e7* and Black saves himself.) 25...♗xg2+ (*25...*♖*f8* allows forced mate after *26.*♕*h3+* ♔*f6 27.*♖*f1+* ♔*xg6 28.*♕*h6#*) 26.♔xg2 d5 Black opens a free route for his king towards the queenside, but he already gave back too much material and loses even more after 27.♕f7+ ♔d6 28.♕xe8+-

25.♗e4+!!

Another brilliant sacrifice! White prevents the hiding of the black king via c6-c7 and instead lures it further towards his own camp, intending to catch it with his remaining pieces.

25...♔xe4

Black has no choice, he must continue his journey.

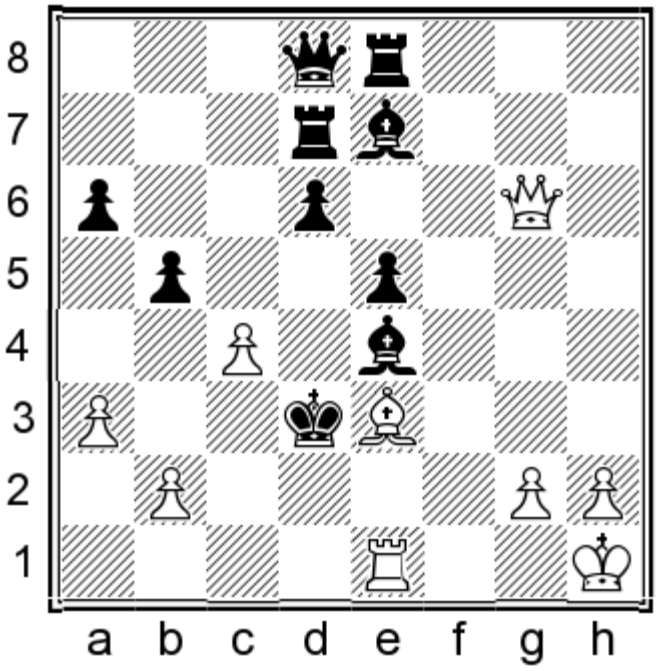


25...♔c4 loses quickly to 26.♕f7+ d5 27.♕f1#

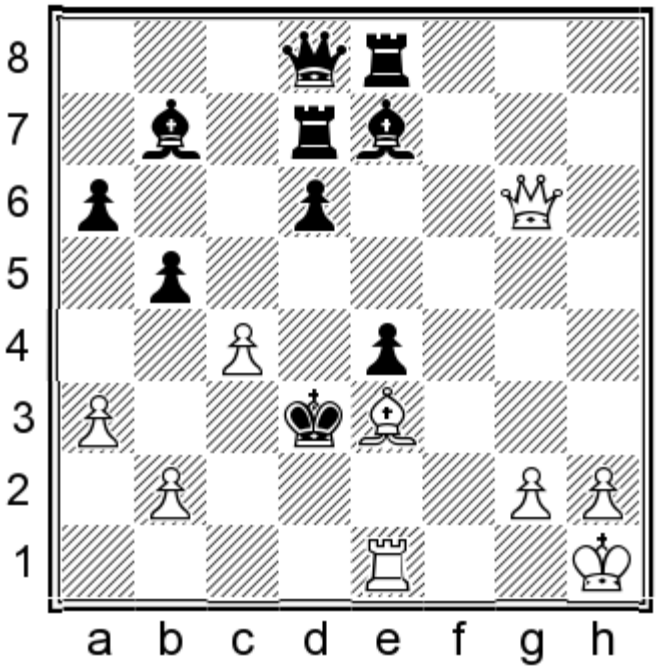
26.♕f7!!

What an amazing follow up! After sacrificing many pieces, White comes up with a silent move! The point is to stop the black king running back via d5-c6-c7 and creates different kind of mate-in-one threats, such as ♕f3 or any bishop move with discovered mate along the g1–a7 diagonal. However, it was even more forcing to play 26.c4!! (an engine move) which is extremely hard to find over the board. It has the same idea as the game: White prevents the ♔d5-c6-c7 defensive plan and this has a special hidden point, which can be seen if Black takes on c4. The point of 26.c4 can be seen after 26...bxc4

(26...♔d3 Black tries to gain some benefits from the c4 move and attempts to hide his king. However it is not succesful. 27.♕xg6+! ♗e4



a) 27...e4



28.♕g4! White is a rook and a bishop down, but the most important factor is the king on d3, therefore he must focus on creating new, and more threatening, mate threats on each move... 28...♔xc4 29.♖c1+ ♔b3 (*29...♔d5 30.♕f5#*) 30.♕d1+ ♔xb2 31.♖b1+ ♔xa3 32.♕b3#

b) 27...♔xc4 28.♖c1+ ♔d5 29.♖d1+ ♔c6 30.♕c2#!;

28.♖d1+! ♔c2 29.♕xe4+ White even sacrifices his rook and mates with only two of his pieces. The black ones are still in their initial positions and cannot take part in the defense. 29...♔xd1 30.♕d3+ ♔e1 31.♕d2+ ♔f1 32.♕d1#) 27.♕xg6+ ♔d5 28.♕f7+! ♔e4 (And now after *28...♔c6 29.♕xc4#!* is mate, which would not be so with the black pawn on b5! This is the reason for pushing 26.c4.) 29.♕xc4+ ♔f5 30.♖f1+ ♔g6 31.♕f7#;

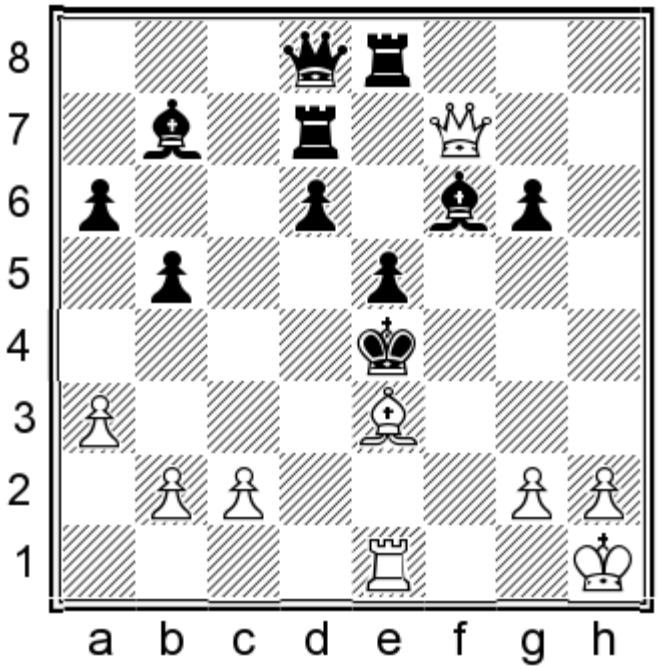
26.♕xg6+? is too slow, Black runs away with 26...♔d5 27.♕f7+ ♔c6–+;

White could win the queen with 26.♗b6+? ♔d5 27.♗xd8 ♖exd8–+ but Black has already gained too much material, and after he hides his king over the next 2 moves he is already winning.

26...♗f6

The only move! 26...♖f8 prevents ♕f3, but allows all the bishop moves, for instance 27.♗g1#

27.♗d2+ ♔d4 28.♗e3+ ♔e4



White again has a draw by perpetual check, but Wei Yi finds a subtle way to play for more!

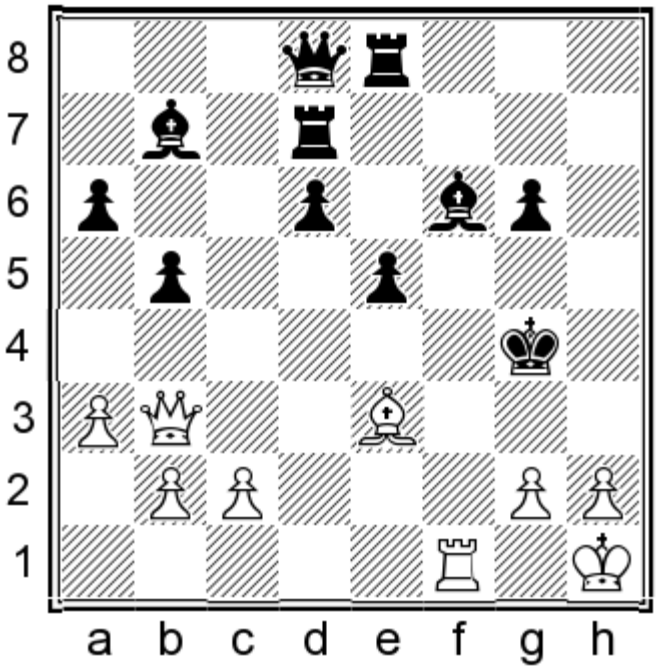
29.♕b3!!

In keeping with the cold-blooded style. Black has closed the f-file, succesfully excluded the queen from the attack, but as it is the longest-ranged piece it can quickly join back in the hunt of the black king. The new mate-in-one threat is ♕d3. Black has only one move to avoid it.

29...♔f5 30.♖f1+!

Of course, White's only chance is to keep the king outside his own camp and try to catch it while it is running across the board.

30...♔g4

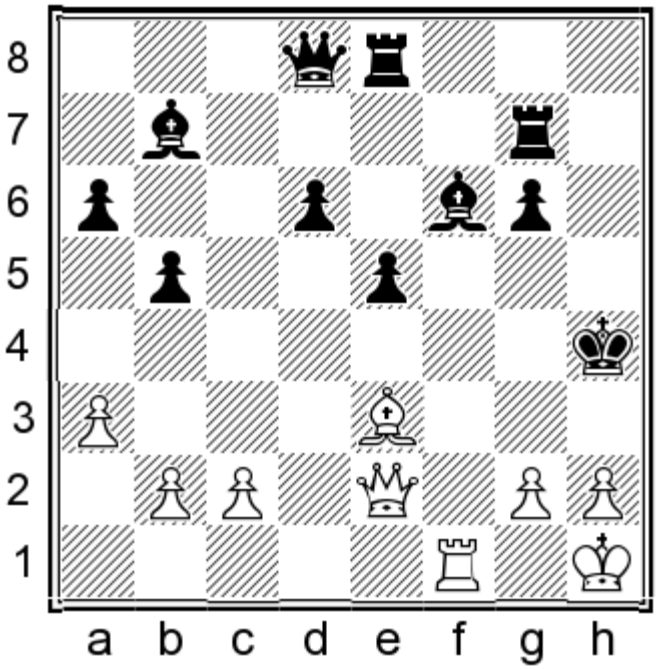


31.♕d3!

We are already used to this kind of silent move. Despite the huge material disadvantage, White is not in a rush to finish the game, because Black does not have any counterplay. He can only hope for consolidating, but for this he would need much better placed pieces.

31...♗xg2+

Black decides to give back some material and tries to bring the queen to defend along the long diagonal with tempo. 31...♔h5 loses to 32.♕e2+ ♔h4 33.♖f3!! ♗xf3 34.♕xf3+- and Black is unable to defend the mate-in-one threatened with ♕h3! 31...♖g7 also loses to 32.♕e2+ ♔h4



33.h3!! White always creates new concrete threats. Black has to defend against ♕d7 now. 33...♕d7 34.♔h2! Another subtle move! Black has only one move to avoid getting mated with g3! 34...♗xg2 35.♕xg2 White does not have a concrete threat, but still Black has no defense. Now f6 is hanging, followed by mate on g5, and one possible finish of the game could be 35...♗d8 36.♕f2+ ♔h5 37.♕f3+ ♔h4 38.♖g1+- and ♗f2 or ♖g4 next wins.

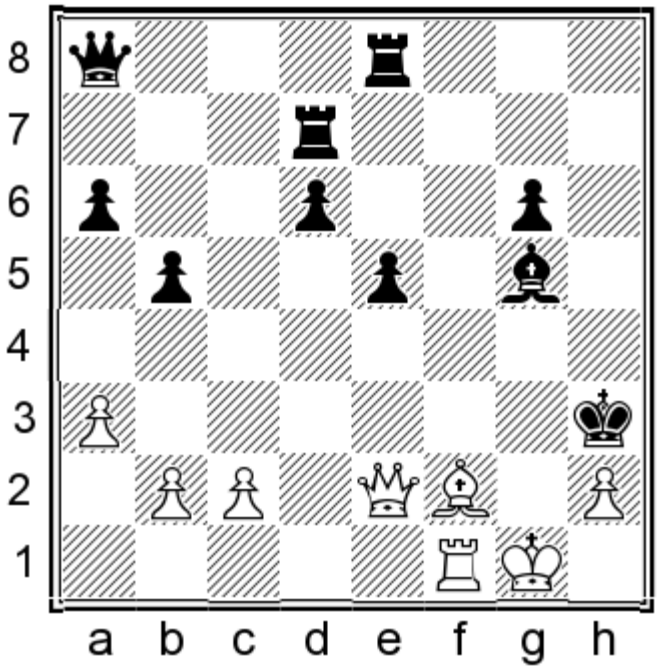
32.♔xg2 ♕a8+ 33.♔g1 ♗g5

Bruzon continues to defend stubbornly, but it does not help this time around!

34.♕e2+!

It was still possible to go wrong with the seemingly logical 34.♕xg6 but Black holds after 34...♖g8!

34...♔h4 35.♗f2+ ♔h3



36.♗e1!

The final blow and a last subtle move! White opens the f-rank in order to allow his rook to join the mating attack. ♖f3 is the threat! Here Black resigned in view of 36.♗e1! ♖f8

(*36...♕a7+ 37.♔h1 ♕a8+ 38.♖f3+ ♔g4 39.♕g2+ ♔h5 40.♖h3++-;*

36...e4 defends ♖f3, but closes the long diagonal *37.♕g2#*)

37.♖xf8 ♕xf8 38.♕g2# What an amazing game by the 16-year old Chinese super talent, Wei Yi!

1–0

GAME 45
W. So (2779)
L. Aronian (2765)
3rd Sinquefield Cup 2015 Saint Louis USA (4.3)

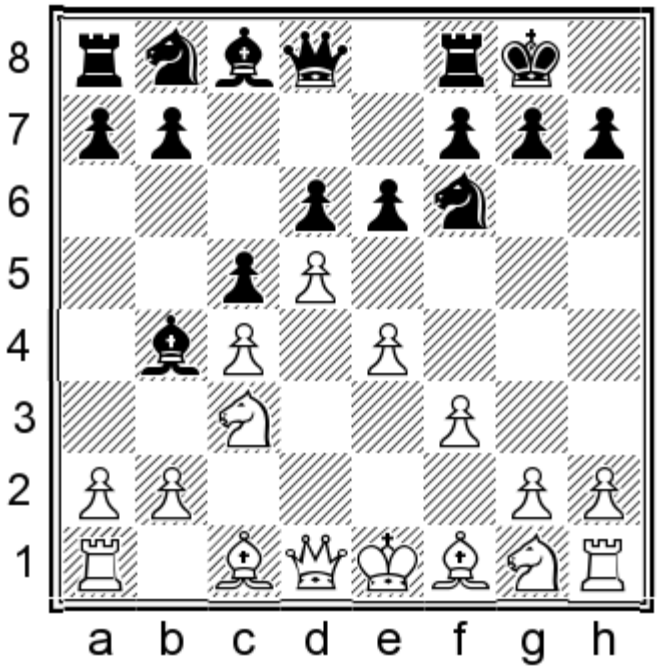
26.08.2015, [E20]
Annotated by Balogh Csaba

Levon Aronian has been through a bad period lately, dropping a lot of rating points, but his form and great style seem to be back as the following nice victory shows.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.f3

The Nimzo with 4.f3 is a clear sign that White also wants to win this game. Most of its lines lead to unusual and sharp positions.

4...c5 5.d5 0-0 6.e4 d6



A recent approach by Black to deal with this opening. He allows his opponent to occupy and build a strong center with his pawns, but he wants to create counterplay by using his lead in development. The structure might remind us of the Saemisch system in the King's Indian Defense, with the difference that the bishop stands on b4 instead of g7 now.

7.♘ge2 a6

Black immediately wants to undermine the center with b5.

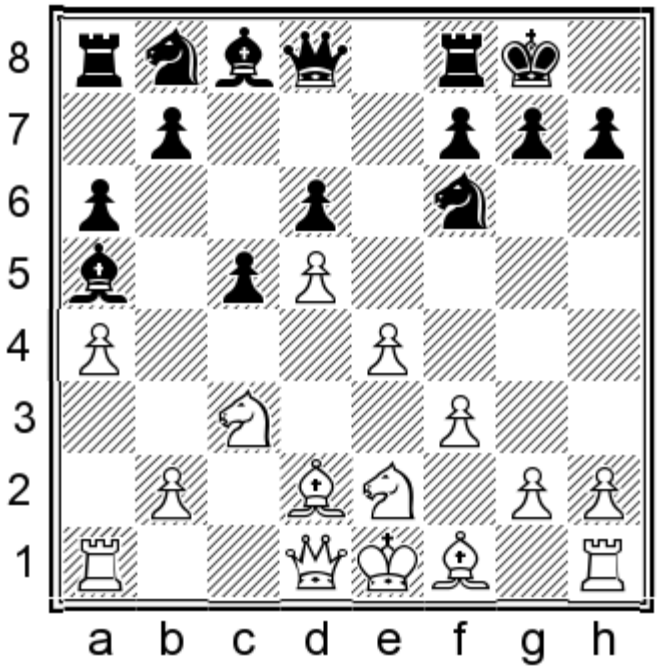
8.a4

White prevents b5, but it also has the drawback that it weakens the dark squares on the queenside.

8...♗a5!

A very nice idea! Black again prepares for the b5 break! The point of the previous move was to temporarily close the a-file and to create a pin between the two rooks. b5 did not work before as White could simply take it with axb5, but with the bishop on a5, Black wants to take back with axb5 — and he then threatens to win a rook with ♗xc3+. White's next move serves to prevent this idea by avoiding ♗xc3 coming with check at the end of this, and thus the a8 rook will be hanging.

9.♗d2 exd5 10.cxd5



10...♘h5!

White succesfully prevented the concrete ideas on the queenside, therefore Black switches to the other flank. By moving to h5 with the knight Black sometimes opens the possibility of ♕h4. This is especially strong if White wants to finish his development by relocating his knight from e2. Another idea is to open the lines in front of the centralised king via ...f5.

11.g3

Due to the ♕h4 check, White had no other way to complete development than by g3-♗g2 and 0-0.

11...♘d7 12.♗g2 b5!

Black uses the final moment to execute this break and gain space on the queenside. Otherwise White castles on the next move and there will be no ♗xd2 check to open the a-file.

13.g4

White wants to push the knight back to f6 with tempo, with the idea of playing ♘g3, which would also vacate the ideal e2 retreating square for the c3 knight after getting attacked by b4. However, Black has a strong intermediate move as we will soon see.

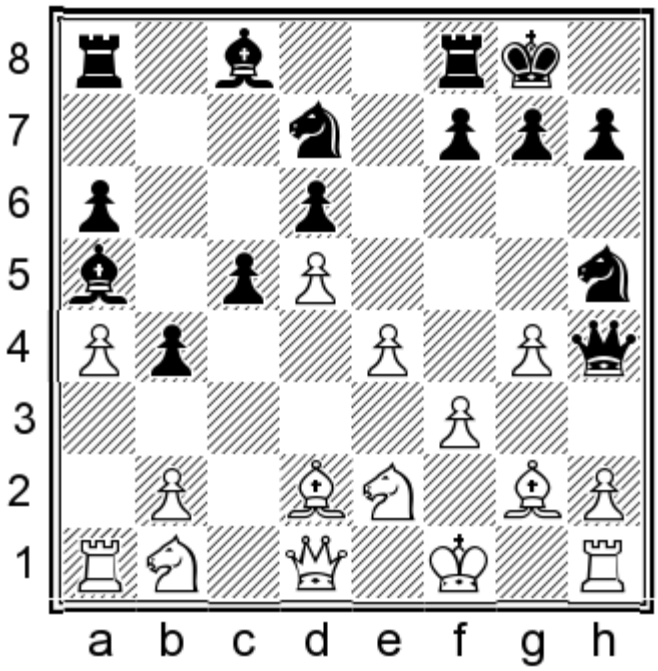
White should not be too materialistic with 13.axb5 axb5 14.♘xb5 because it lets the white king run to the middle of the board. There are too many pieces left for Black to create some dangerous compensation. 14...♗xd2+ 15.♔xd2 ♗a6 followed by ♕b6 next.;

13.0-0 was the alternative, but in this case Black's counterplay comes very quickly too! 13...b4 14.♘b1 ♗b6! with the idea of playing c4+, ♘c5-b3 or ♘d3, while after 15.♗e3 a5 followed by ♗a6 looks very strong.

13...b4! 14.♘b1

White could win a pawn with 14.gxh5 but it ruins his structure and also lets the initiative pass to Black. 14...bxc3 15.bxc3 ♕h4+ 16.♘g3 ♘e5 With very strong compensation for the pawn!

14...♕h4+ 15.♔f1



15...♘e5!

Great play by Aronian! He wants to sacrifice a piece to launch a devastating attack against the f1 king and the temporarily immobilized white pieces.

16.♗e1

16.gxh5 is strongly met by 16...f5! opening the lines towards White's king. White can hardly survive such an attack, especially with such unco-ordinated pieces.

16...♕f6!

This double attack on g4 and f3 forces White to accept the sacrifice on h5. Actually 16...♕e7!? 17.gxh5 f5 was also possible, but the text move is even stronger.

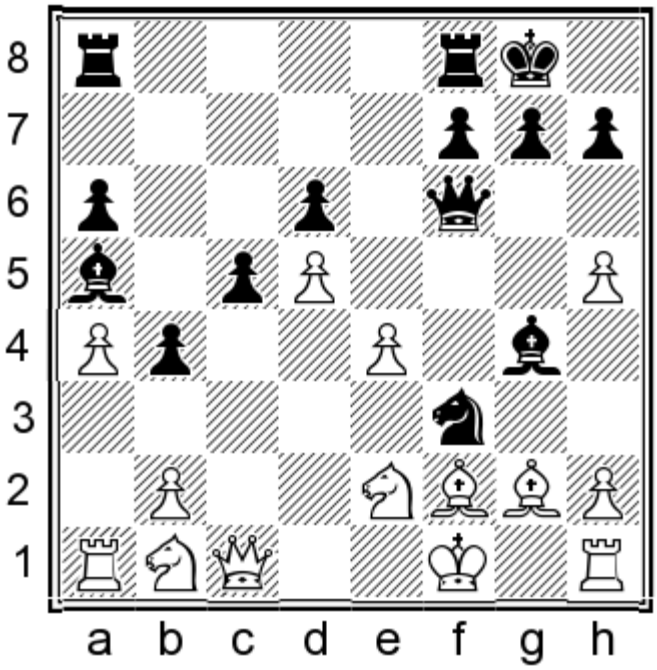
17.gxh5 ♘xf3 18.♗f2

The only move for White to unpin himself on the f-file.

18...♗g4

Developing and pinning the e2 knight at the same time. Black is threatening to play ♘d4! Black could also play 18...♕xb2!? 19.♗xf3 ♕xa1 20.♔g2 f5 but Aronian prefers to keep his active pieces on the board instead of recovering some material.

19.♕c1



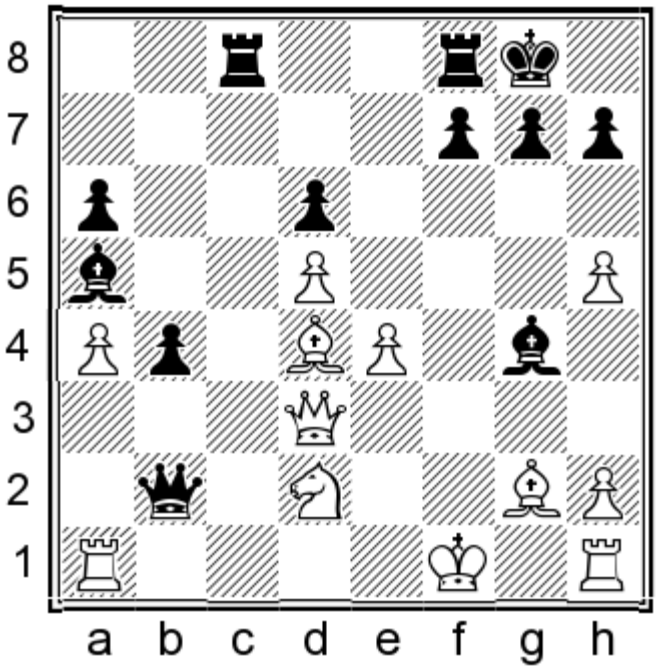
19.h3 ♗xh5 does not solve any of the problems. Black is still threatening ...♘d4 and White cannot unpin himself with 20.♘g3? because it allows 20...♘h2+! 21.♖xh2 ♗xd1–+

19...♘d4!

An amazingly strong move! Black exchanges one of his big trumps for another one. He trades his strong knight, but it turns out to be a more important factor that it also opens the c-file, where his rooks are going to invade very soon. White is forced to trade knights because of the ♘b3 threat.

20.♘xd4 cxd4 21.e5

The beautiful key line runs 21.♘d2 trying to complete development. 21...♖ac8 22.♕b1 d3! Otherwise White consolidates with ♕d3, but now the diagonals are opening... 23.♕xd3 ♕xb2 24.♗d4

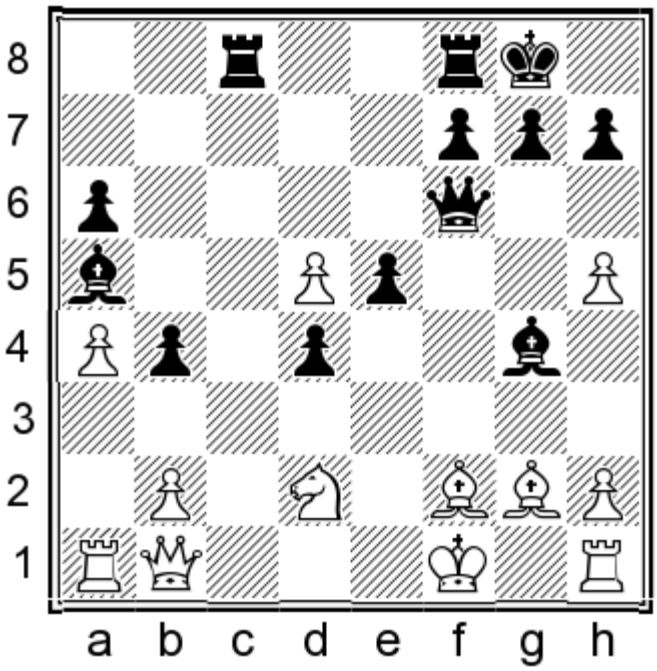


24...♖c3! 25.♗xc3 bxc3 With a double attack on two white pieces. The capture of any of them would be fatal from White's point of view and after 26.♖b1 c2!! is the point and Black wins! 27.♖xb2 c1=♕+ 28.♔f2 ♕xb2–+

21...dxe5 22.♘d2

In comparison to the 21.♘d2 line, White gets the e4 square for his knight and also closes the f6-b2 diagonal, which was the key resource for Black after pushing d3. On the other hand, it gave Black another pawn — even if he just plays slowly and moves his queen, followed by pushing f5-e4, the compensation looks to be very strong. But of course, Aronian continues playing the most direct and active moves.

22...♖ac8 23.♕b1



23...b3!

Luring the knight from e4 by sacrificing another pawn. Black is ready to invade on c2, so White is yet again forced to accept the sacrifice.

24.♘xb3

24.♘e4 ♕f4 with ♖c2 next is decisive.

24...♗b6

Perhaps it was even stronger to play 24...d3!? 25.♕xd3

(*25.♘xa5 ♖c2 26.♕e1 ♖e2–+*)

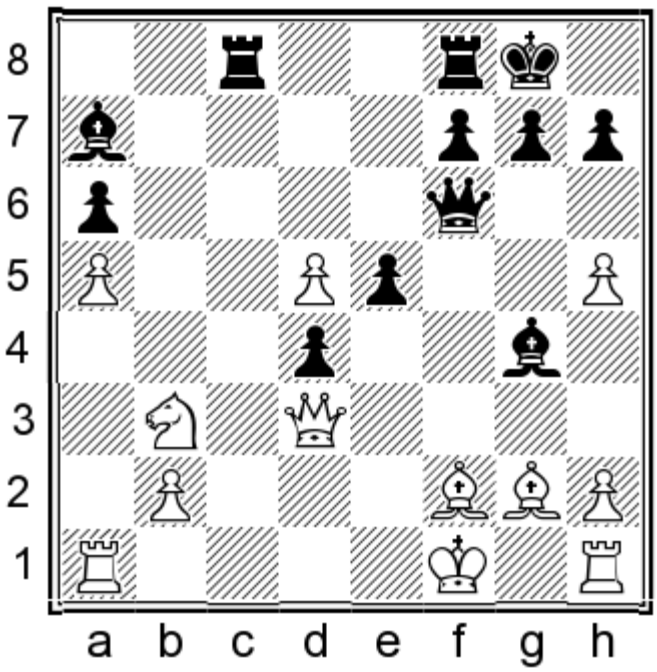
25...♗b6 26.♕d2 e4! threatening to crush with e3! Black wins in all lines: 27.♗xe4

(*27.♔g1 e3 28.♗xe3 ♖c2! 29.♕xc2 ♗xe3+–+*)

27...♖fe8–+

25.a5 ♗a7 26.♔g1

White escapes from the pin on the f-file, but it only prevents the concrete problems after d3! Black has other means at his disposal to strengthen his position. 26.♕d3 is nicely refuted by

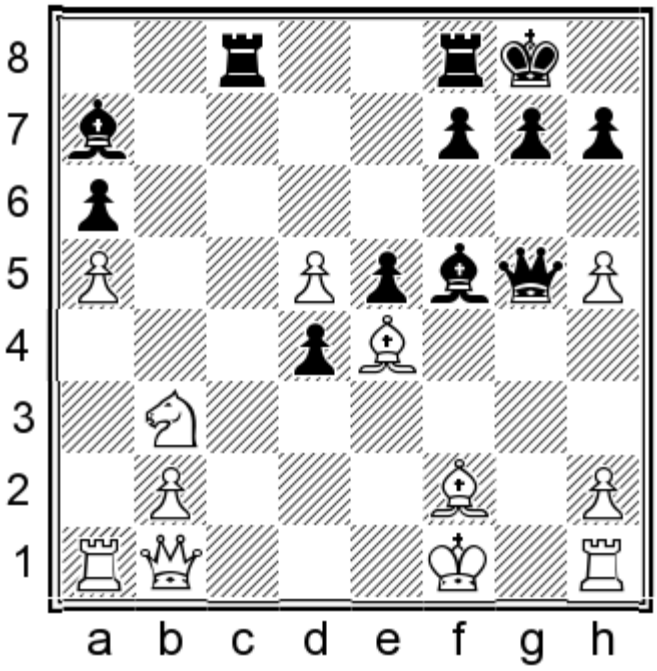


26...♖c2! 27.♕xc2 d3! wins the queen as 28.♕d2 loses to 28...♗e2+–+ and mate on f2.

26...♗f5! 27.♗e4

27.♕e1 e4!–+ The central pawns supported by the pieces are swatting White away! 27.♕d1 ♗c2–+ wins back the piece and collects the full point!

27...♕g5+ 28.♔f1



28...♕f4!

A very nice finishing move, in the same style as the entire game! White resigned in view of 28...♕f4 29.♗xf5 d3 30.♕e1 ♖c2–+ with decisive problems around the f2 square.

0–1

GAME 46
W. So (2779)
Hi Nakamura (2814)
3rd Sinquefield Cup 2015 Saint Louis USA (6.4)
29.08.2015, [E99]
Annotated by Balogh Csaba

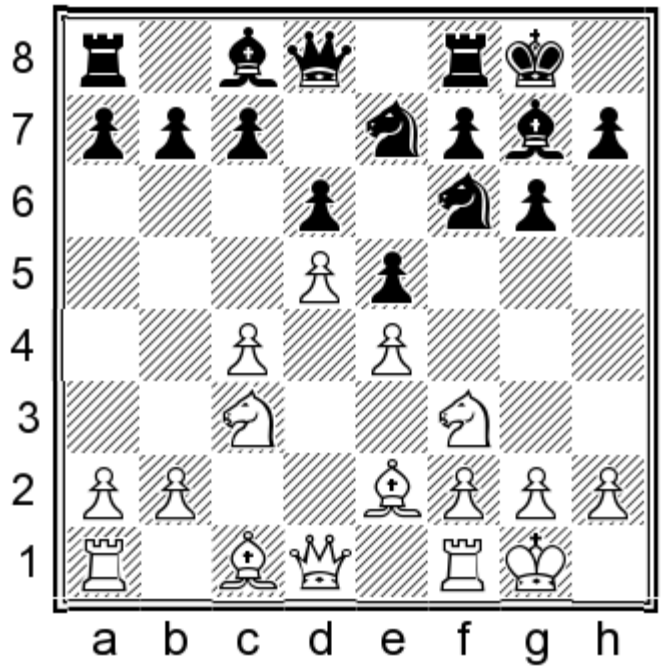
A brilliant attacking game by Nakamura! We don't often see a top GM getting mated with his king on g6 whilst all pieces are still on the board.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7

The King's Indian Defense! A clear sign that Nakamura wants to win this game, despite having the black pieces.

4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0-0 6.♗e2 e5 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7

The initial position of the classical main line. White has a wide range of choice here, all of them with huge theory. His plans are mainly connected to the queenside, while Black soon launches an attack on the kingside with f5.



9.♘e1

The old main line. White relocates his knight to d3 from where it supports the queenside break with c5 and also allows him to stabilize the center with f3 against the ...f5 plans. 9.b4 recently became the most common line.

9...♘d7 10.f3

By starting with the 10.f3 or 10.♗e3 move order (in comparison to 10.♘d3), White succesfully transfers his bishop to the g1–a7 diagonal, from where it increases pressure on the queenside and also vacates the c1 square for the heavy pieces.

10...f5 11.♗e3 f4 12.♗f2 g5

A typical King's Indian game. White soon executes the c5 break, while Black focuses all his pieces on the kingside for an attack. There are still thousands of games in the databases for this position.

13.♘d3

Wesley So had a game last year with 13.♖c1 and he also tried 13.g4 which is another strategy. White tries to lock the kingside first (possibly with h4-h5) before continuing the queenside actions. Nakamura was definetely prepared against all these ideas.

13...♘g6 14.c5 ♘f6

The black pieces are heading towards the kingside. He soon prepares for the break with g4.

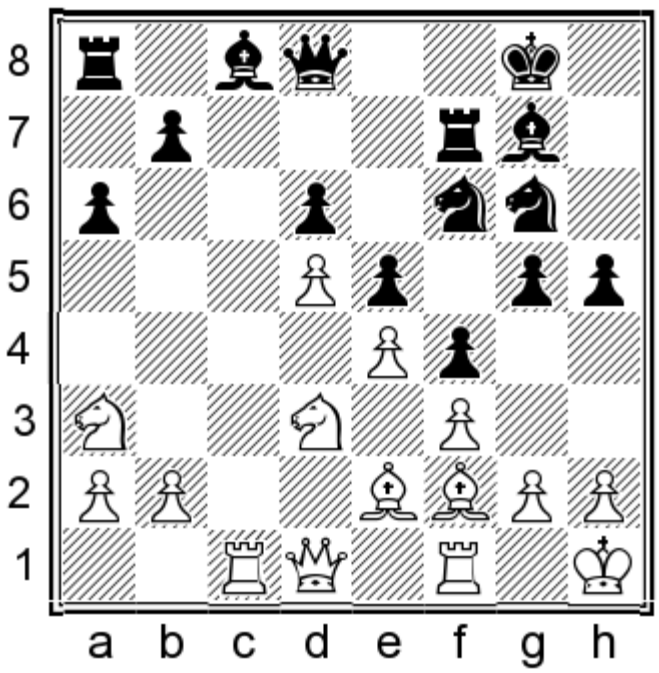
15.♖c1 ♖f7!

A standard multi-functional move in the King's Indian. Black protects the critical c7 square against the cxd6 cxd6 ♘b5 idea and at the same time he prepares to strengthen his kingside attack by transferring his rook to g7 (after ♗h6).

16.♔h1 h5 17.cxd6 cxd6 18.♘b5

We can see now the point of 15...♖f7! White would threaten ♘c7 and the a7 pawn is also hanging, as well as the positional threat of installing the knight to e6 after which Black's attack has much less potential.

18...a6 19.♘a3



19...b5!

We are still following theory, but Black's last move is instructive anyway. The question was to weaken the c6 square or to allow ♘c4-b6?! The key idea is that Black needs his light squared bishop for a succesfull attack. First of all it supports g4 and secondly — without the bishop — White could defend perfectly with g4-♗g1–g3-h3. However with the bishop on c8 Black always has sacrifices on h3 at his disposal. Therefore it becomes clear that giving up the c6 square has a smaller negative value than allowing the knight to jump to b6.

20.♖c6

White would like to lure the bishop to b7, because the bishop clearly belongs on the c8-h3 diagonal. ♗d7 does not work because of the d6 pawn and White also wants to triple on the c-file with ♕c2 and ♖c1.

20...g4 21.♕c2 ♕f8!

Another strong positional move! White was ready to bring his rook to c1 and suddenly Black cannot do anything with his bishop on c8! However now, after ♕f8, he can play ♗d7 as the d6 pawn is already defended.

22.♖c1 ♗d7 23.♖c7 ♗h6

Another possible plan was 23...h4!? just like in the game. Black wants to push h3 and g3, destroying the kingside structure. The concrete question surrounds 24.fxg4. That is also the reason why Nakamura started with 23...♗h6, to push f3 now. 24...♘xe4 25.♗f3 ♘g5 If White could consolidate the e4 square with his knight, or somehow use the c2-g6 diagonal with his queen, he would be more than fine, but the d3 knight is standing poorly. Black appears to be doing well.

24.♗e1 h4!

This is the right way to continue the attack! Black wants to explode the kingside with h3! If he had started with g3, then White would have played h3 followed by ♗f1, strengthening all the pawns on the kingside.

25.fxg4

25.♗b4 h3! 26.gxh3 g3! This looks like the most effective way to open the lines in front of the king. ♗xh3 and ♘h4 are coming next. 27.♗f1 a5 Black has to send the bishop away from b4, because the direct ♘h4 runs into ♘xe5. 28.♗e1 ♘h4→;

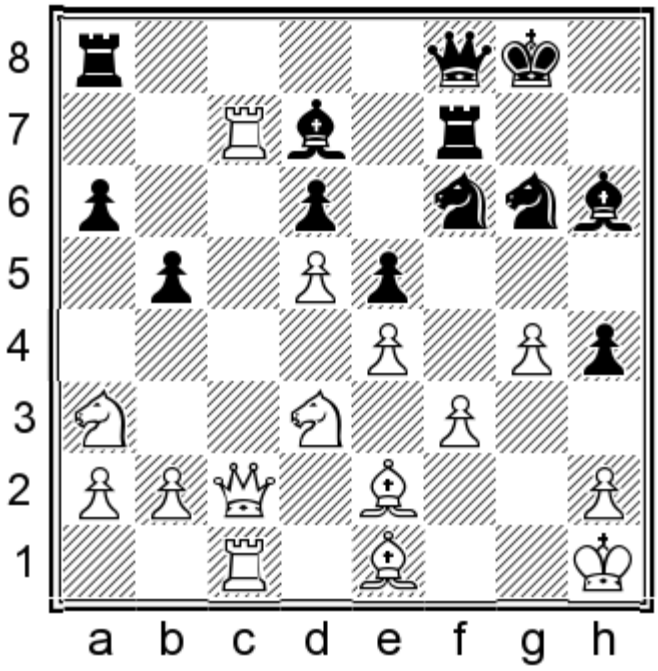
25.♘b4 is also met by 25...h3! 26.gxh3 g3! ♘h4 is coming next, combined with ♗xh3, and it looks extremely dangerous from White's point of view.

25...f3!

25...♘xg4? loses to 26.♖xd7;

25...♗xg4 allows exchanges (which help White to survive the attack) and positionally he is better on the queenside. 26.♖xf7 ♕xf7 27.♗xg4 ♘xg4 28.♕c7

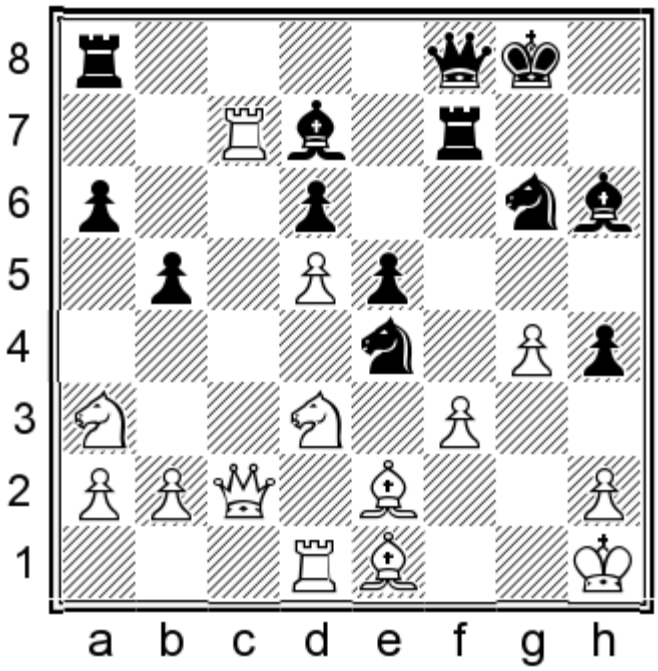
26.gxf3



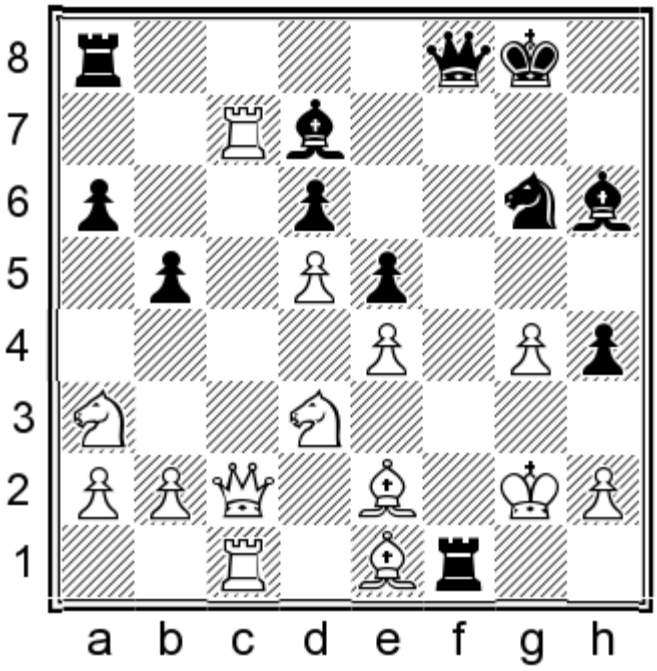
26...♘xe4!!

Nakamura had correctly foreseen this move and its consequences two moves earlier, when he started to sacrifice his pawns. The concrete line shows that the attack is extremely strong and White is probably in deep trouble. The threat is ♖xf3, completely destroying the defenders around the king. 26...♗xc1? 27.♕xc1 would let the initiative pass to White! Black needs the King's Indian bishop to break through with the attack, while the rook is, temporarily at least, not doing anything on c1.

27.♖d1



27.fxe4 is similar to the game. 27...♖f1+! 28.♔g2



28...♗e3!! This is the key move just as happened later in the actual game! Black threatens mate after h3 or ♖g1! 29.♗xf1 h3+! 30.♔g3 ♕xf1 and White has no adequate defense against the mate! ♗f4 is the direct mate threat, but Black also could play ♖f8 next. 31.♖xd7 ♗f4+ 32.♘xf4 exf4# An unusual mate! 27.♖xd7 is also met by 27...♖xf3! 28.♗xf3 ♕xf3+ 29.♕g2

(*29.♔g1 h3*–+ ♗e3 comes next and after anything moves to f2, there is mate on g2!)

29...♕xd3–+ The c1 rook is hanging and ♘f4 or h3 is coming next.

27...♖xf3!

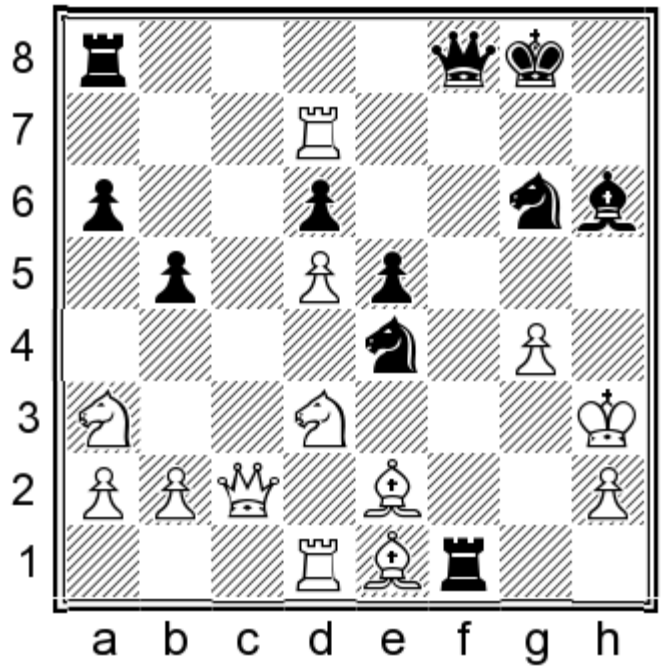
Nakamura calculates correctly! It is easy to feel that with so many pieces around the king the attack should break through!

28.♖xd7

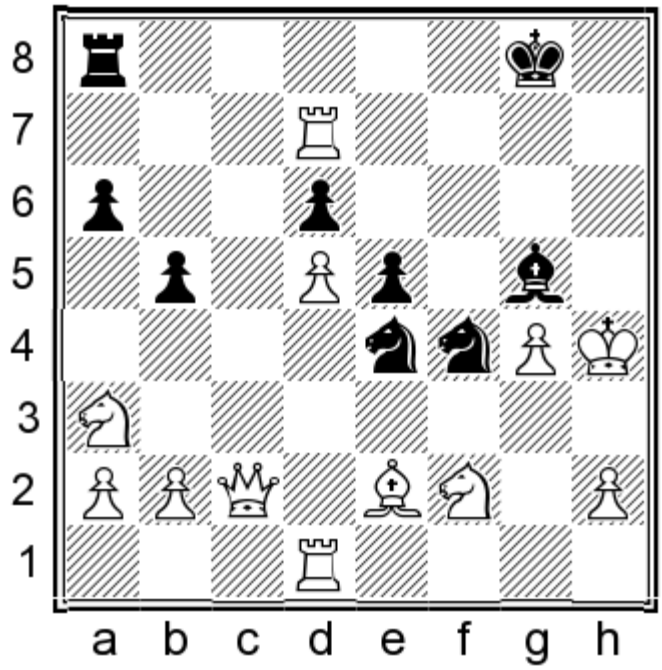
28.♗xf3 ♕xf3+ 29.♔g1 h3!–+ Just as in the 27.♖xd7 line, ♗e3 is coming next, followed by mate on g2!

28...♖f1+! 29.♔g2 ♗e3!

29...h3+! was even stronger according to the engines, having in mind the following amazing mate: 30.♔xh3

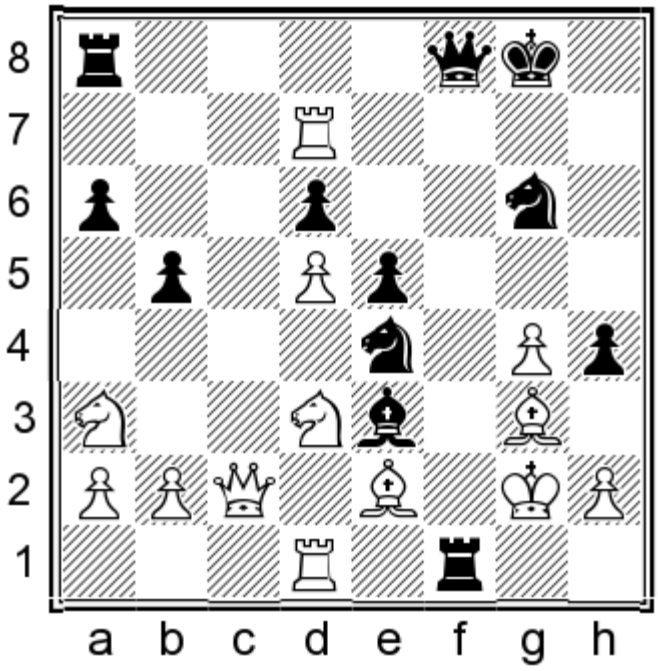


30...♖f2!! 31.♗xf2 ♕xf2!! 32.♘xf2 (*32.♖f1 ♘g5#*) 32...♘f4+ 33.♔h4 ♗g5#



It would have been shocking to finish the game like this!

30.♗g3



30.♗xf1 leads to forced mate after 30...h3+ 31.♔xh3 ♕f3+ 32.♗g3 ♘g5#

30...hxg3!

Nakamura leads out the attack precisely! He frees the h4 square for the knight! White cannot create any counterplay against the g8 king and he is lacking coordination between his pieces to organize any kind of defense.

31.♖xf1 ♘h4+ 32.♔h3

32.♔h1 g2#

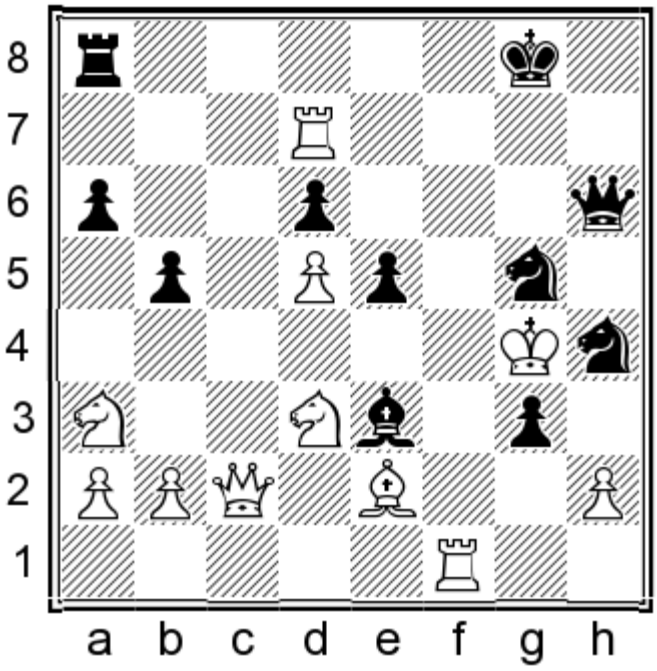
32...♕h6!

White cannot unpin himself on the h-file and it is clear that the story should soon end in mate!

33.g5

On 33.hxg3 the fastest mate is 33...♘g5+ 34.♔h2 ♘hf3+ 35.♔g2 ♕h2#

33...♘xg5+ 34.♔g4



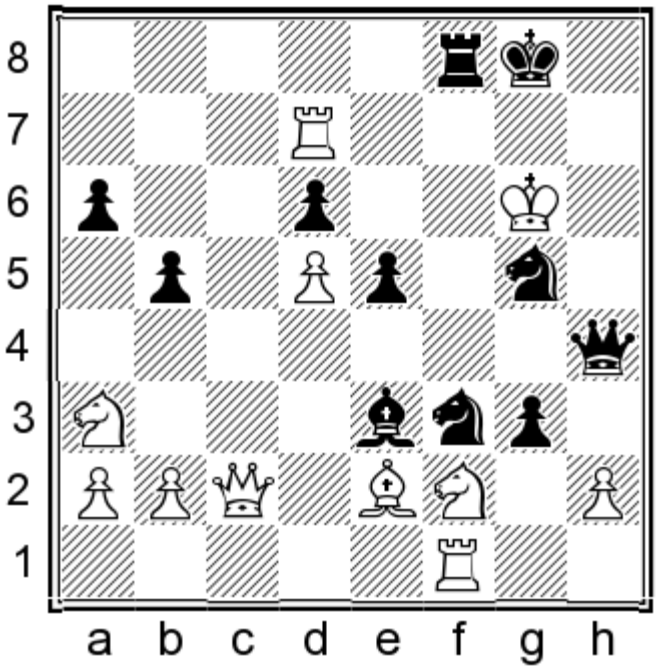
34...♘hf3!

Another great sacrifice! Black threatens, with ♕h3, mate in one move and also to further haunt the king with ♕h4!

35.♘f2

35.♗xf3 ♕h3#

35...♕h4+ 36.♔f5 ♖f8+ 37.♔g6



Well, of course Black has many good moves against such a king on g6, but Nakamura finishes the game in style!

37...♖f6+! 38.♔xf6 ♘e4+ 39.♔g6

39.♔f5 could have prolonged the game by a move: 39...♕f4+ 40.♔e6 ♕f6#

39...♕g5#

WOW!

0–1

GAME 47
Hi Nakamura (2816)
W. So (2760)
Millionaire TB Final 2015 Las Vegas USA (3)
12.10.2015, [A18]
Annotated by Balogh Csaba

The qualifying stage of the 2nd Millionaire Chess tournament was very exciting. 3 players qualified with 6 points and there was a 9-player tiebreak for the 4th and final place with 5.5 points — including the three top seeds, Nakamura, Caruana and Wesley So. This is already the last game of the tiebreak, where with a brilliant victory Nakamura secured his place in the Final Four!

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 e6 3.e4

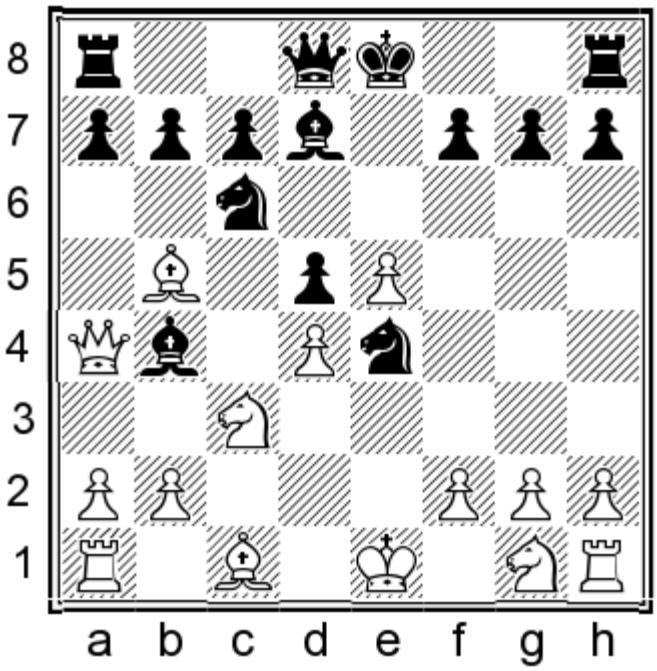
A dangerous weapon against players who want to employ the Nimzo Indian defense.

3...d5 4.cxd5 exd5 5.e5 ♘e4 6.d4

Theory is just about to develop here, and there are not too many games played in the database so far.

6...♘c6

Most of the games continue with 6...♗b4 although I prefer White’s chances even here after 7.♕a4+ ♘c6 8.♗b5 ♗d7



9.♘ge2 followed by 0-0. White's structure looks more healthy. Black should undermine the center either with c5 or with f6, but the c6 knight and the weakness of the d5 pawn prevents him from executing these plans properly.

7.♗b5 ♗e7 8.♘ge2 0-0 9.0-0 ♗f5

We have already reached a new position without any games in the database. It is quite rare at the highest level that such things occur after only 9 moves.

10.♗e3 ♘a5

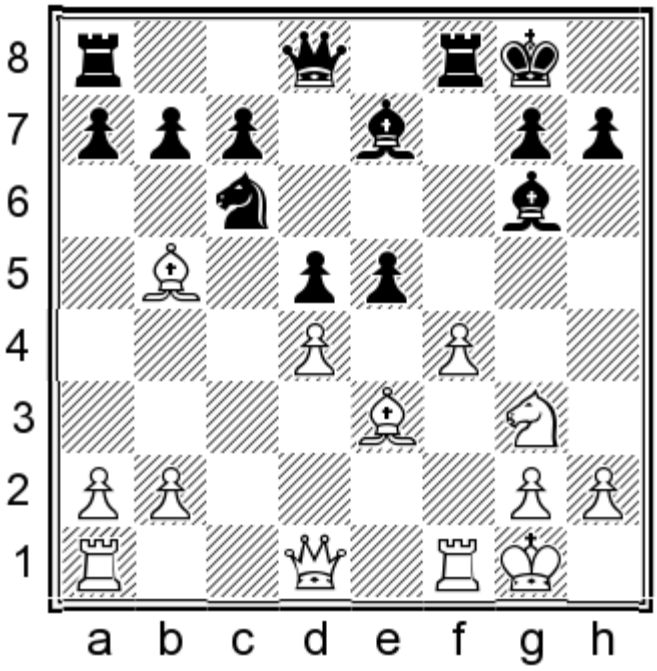
Black has in mind a plan to explode the center with c5, or to play ♘c4. 10...f6 seems more principled to me, but it also fails to equalize: 11.♘xe4 ♗xe4 12.♘g3 ♗g6

(12...fxe5 leads to worse positions everywhere: 13.♘xe4 dxe4 14.♕b3+ ♔h8 15.♗xc6 bxc6

(*15...exd4 16.♖ad1 bxc6 17.♖xd4 ♗d6 18.♖xe4* with an obvious long-term advantage because of the ruined pawn-structure on the queenside.)

16.dxe5± and again Black is clearly worse because of his damaged pawn structure.)

13.f4 fxe5



14.dxe5! White breaks the symmetry in his own favor. A very dangerous queenside attack with f5-e6 or f5-f6 is in the air. Black should play ♘e7-f5 to be fine, but his pieces do not allow it.

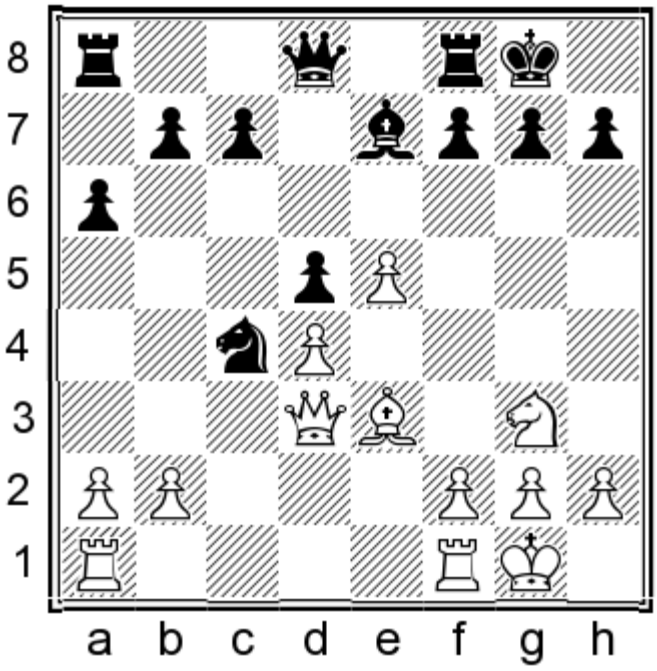
11.♘xe4 ♗xe4 12.♘g3 a6 13.♗d3

Nakamura evaluates that his potential attack with f4-f5 is stronger after trading the light-squared bishops. Actually it was quite a pleasant choice for White, because 13.♗e2!? also looks very promising. 13...♗g6 14.f4 f5

(*14...f6 15.f5 ♗e8 16.e6* This protected passed pawn on e6 cannot lead to anything good from Black's point of view.)

15.♖c1± with a clear positional advantage thanks to the space advantage, the protected passed-pawn on e5 and his superior pieces.

13...♗xd3 14.♕xd3 ♘c4



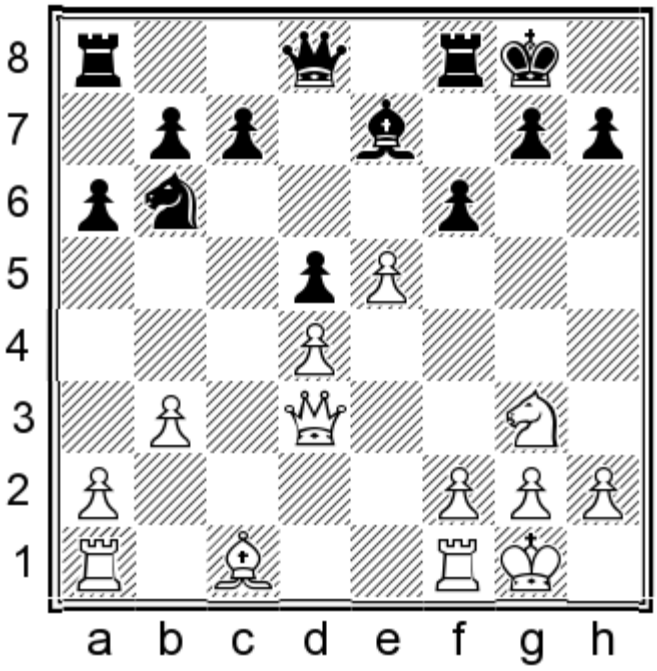
15.♗c1!

White saves his bishop for the future. It might have serious attacking potential, because the knight can go to h5 or f5, and if Black sends it away with g6 he must always deal with ♗h6!

15...f6

Perhaps it was a better try to defend with 15...♕d7, putting the queen on e6, and in case of f4 then Black could play f5!

16.b3 ♘b6



17.e6!

This pawn completely paralyzes the black pieces! He is not in time to attack it quickly and otherwise it is soon going to be defended securely by the f-pawn.

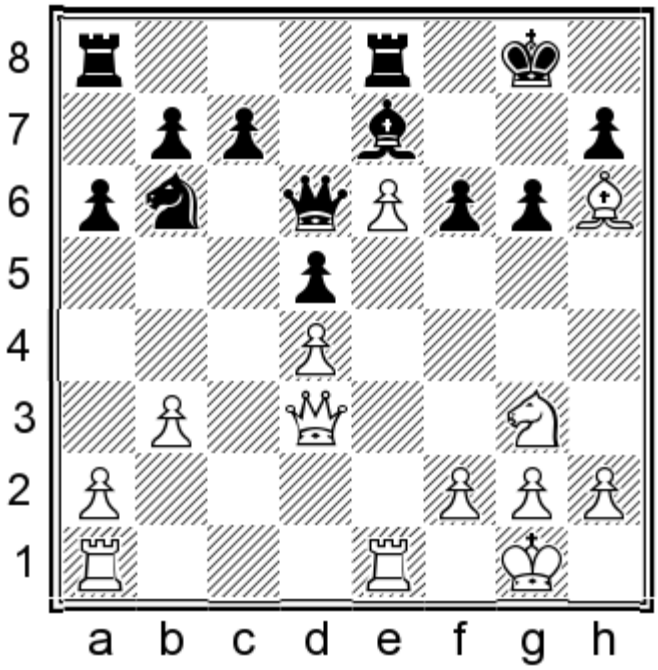
17...♕d6

Another defensive attempt was 17...♗d6 18.f4 ♘c8 building a blockade, but it just solves the direct problems. In the long term, Black cannot co-ordinate his heavy pieces, while White slowly builds his attack. 19.f5 ♘e7 20.♘h5±

18.♖e1 g6

♘f5 had to be prevented.

19.♗h6 ♖fe8



20.f4!

f5 is coming next, using the fact that Black cannot play f5 followed by ♗f6 himself because of a tactical refutation...

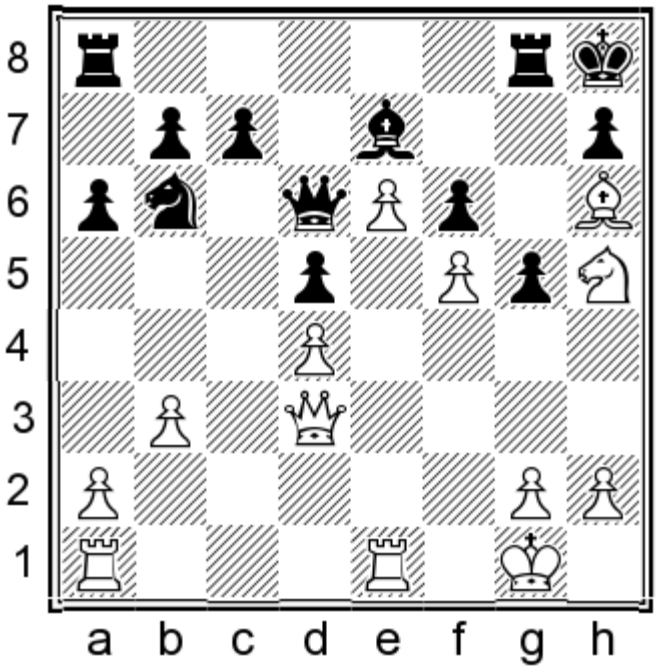
20...♔h8

20...f5 loses to 21.♘xf5! gxf5 22.♕g3++- and mate lands on g7.

21.f5 g5 22.♘h5!

The attack is rolling! White is threatening to play ♗g7xf6!

22...♖g8



23.h4!

Nakamura naturally does not waste time until Black slightly consolidates. He immediately opens the kingside to break through with his attack.

23...g4

23...gxh4 24.♕h3+- and Black cannot use the opening of the g-file. All the squares are perfectly controlled by the white pieces.

24.♖f1!

Freeing the e1 square for the other rook and also intending to attack the g4 pawn with ♖f4 and ♕e2!

24...♕d8 25.♕e2!

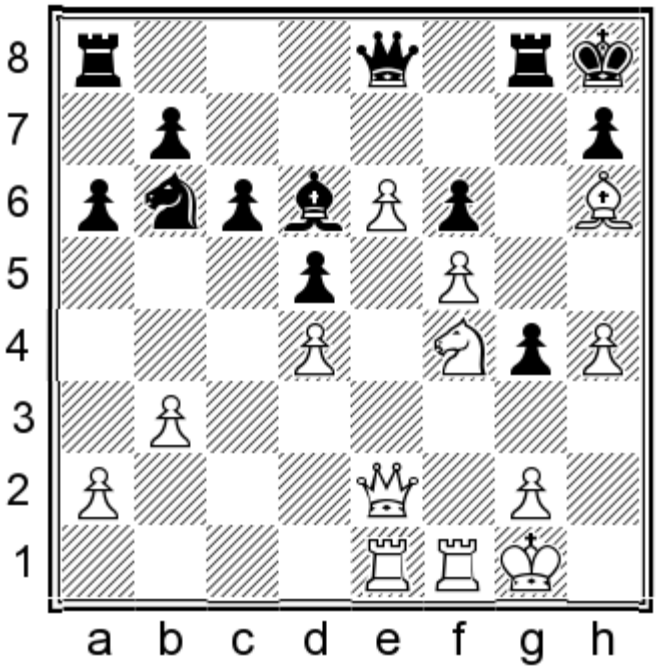
♖f4 is the direct threat!

25...♕e8 26.♘f4 ♗d6 27.♖ae1!

Bringing the last unemployed piece to the game!

27...c6

Black protects his d5 pawn in order to transfer his knight to c8-e7, but it is too slow. The penetration is coming now!

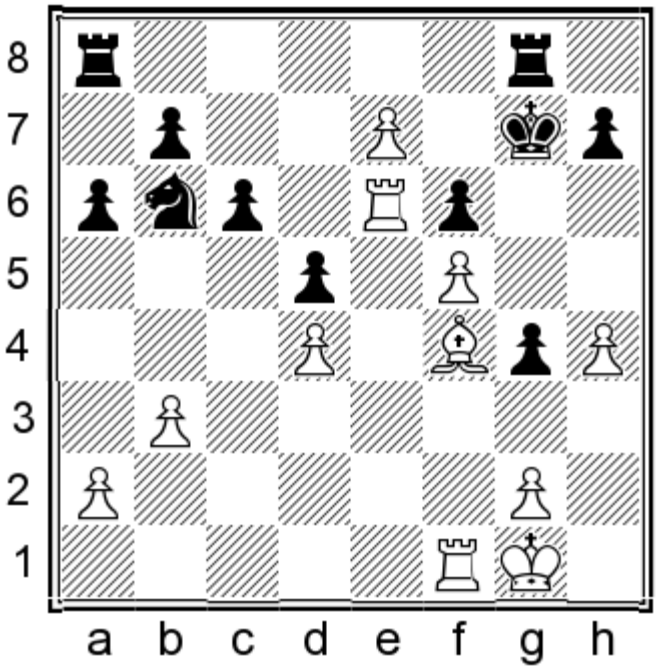


28.e7!

♕e6 is coming next!

28...♘c8

There is no time for 28...♕f7 followed by ♖ae8, because White is coming faster with 29.♕e6! ♕xe6 30.♖xe6 and the f6 pawn falls. 30...♗xf4 31.♗xf4 ♔g7



(*31...♖ae8 32.♖xf6 ♖xe7 33.♗e5+-* wins. Black cannot escape from the deadly pin. *33...♘d7 34.♖e6+*)

32.♗c7! Quite an unusual trapping of the knight! 32...♘d7 33.♖d6!+- shows well the power of the e7 pawn, which completely disco-ordinates the black pieces.

29.♕e6

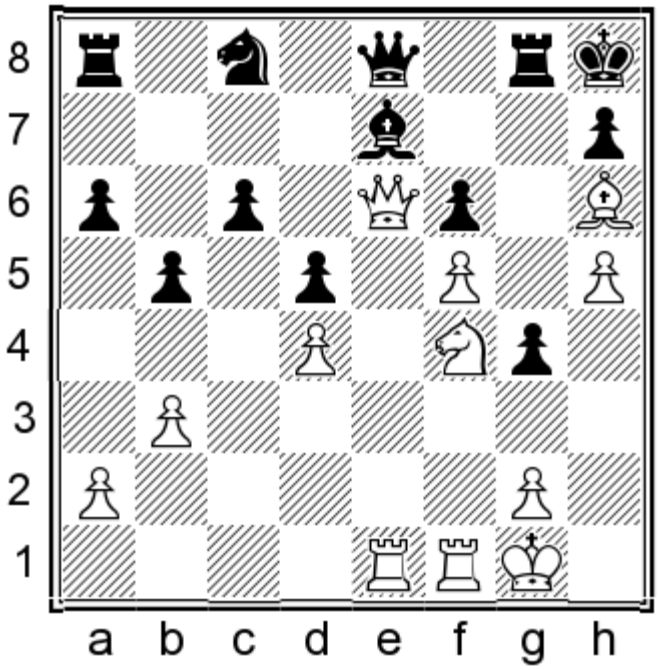
29.♗f8+- was also quite spectacular and strong.

29...♗xe7 30.h5!!

Preparation for the final break!

30...b5

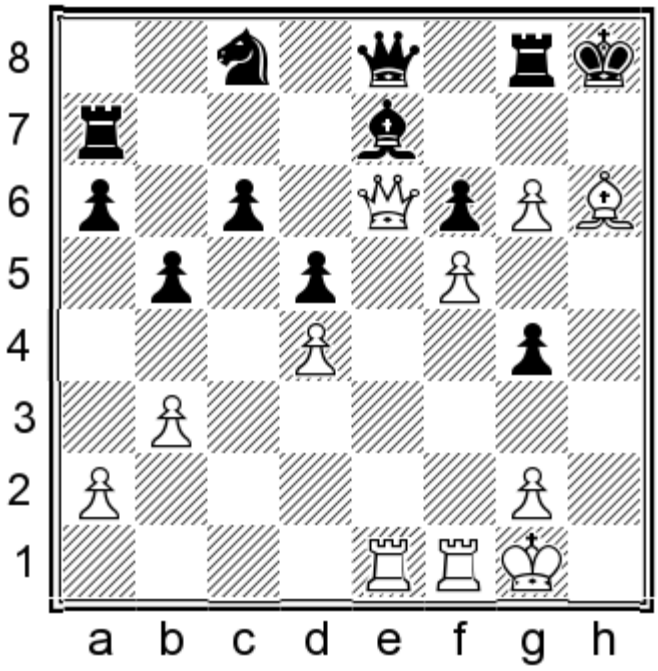
Black tries defending with ...♖a7, which could be followed by ♘d6-e4, but it is already too slow.



31.♘g6+!!

The point of the previous move! White sacrifices a piece in order to open the h-file. A rook arrives there soon and Black will have no defense against the mates.

31...hxg6 32.hxg6 ♖a7



33.♔f2!

The final part of the h5-♘g6-hxg6 idea. ♖h1 is coming next and Black has no defense despite his extra piece. They are all completely tied up and paralyzed.

33...g3+ 34.♔f3 ♖xg6

Desperation, but it was over anyway.

35.fxg6 ♕xg6 36.♕xc8+ ♔h7 37.♖h1

Black resigned! A great attacking game by Nakamura!

1–0

GAME 48
V. Kramnik (2777)
V. Topalov (2813)
31st ECC Open 2015 Skopje MKD (5.1)
22.10.2015, [A46]
Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

A game between two former World Champions can't be anything but a brutal fight. The two chess legends do not shake hands and clearly want to win their every encounter. This time it is Kramnik who is favored by fortune. After the opening Black gets into a slightly worse position where White manages to develop very dangerous play against the black king, and later on simply mates. A very instructive and strong display by Kramnik, who seems to be in a fantastic shape as he scored 4.5/5 in the ECC!

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 e6 3.e3

Lately Kramnik has changed his approach to preparation a bit. Before he was playing the main lines with very deep analyses of them and now he likes to play sidelines, but also with a lot of ideas within them.

3...c5 4.♗d3

This move order gives Black a wide choice of options.

4...b6

one of the main lines: another one is the simple 4...d5

5.0-0 ♗b7 6.c4

White is fighting for the center.

6...cxd4 7.exd4 ♗e7 8.♘c3 d5

and here we are in a very well-known position which can be reached through a lot of different move-orders.

9.cxd5

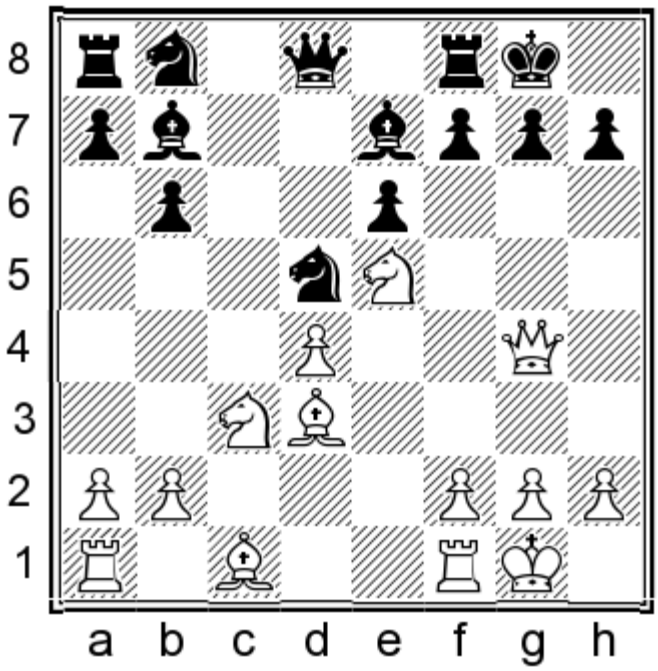
The most critical. If Black were to be in time with 0-0 and ♘bd7, he would reach a very good Queen's Gambit type of position.

9...♘xd5 10.♘e5

This is the key! White immediately launches his play on the kingside.

10...0-0 11.♕g4

This is the critical position.



11...f5

A safe move, but maybe White is already better after it. The very concrete option was 11...♘f6 12.♕h3 ♕xd4 with very crazy play. Actually in practice we rarely see games on a higher level here, even if it is quite unclear why Black didn't choose this line.

12.♕e2

So White has reached what he wanted with the ♕g4 move- to provoke a weakness.

12...♗f6

Maybe another idea for Black is to play 12...♘c7 13.♖d1 ♘c6 and hope to exchange this nasty knight on e5.

13.♗c4

A nice move. Now Black needs to be very careful of the a2-g8 diagonal.

13...♖e8 14.♖d1

Another useful move by Kramnik, who is surely still in his preparation.

14...♘d7

I think this is a mistake. Maybe Black should still have tried to put the knight on c6. 14...♘c6 15.♘xd5 (*15.♗b5* doesn't lead anywhere now. *15...♖c8*) 15...exd5 16.♗f4 The position is very interesting and sharp. It might be better for White, but this still needs to be proved.

15.♗b5!

Kramnik shows great feeling for the position and basically forces Black to take with the bishop on e5.

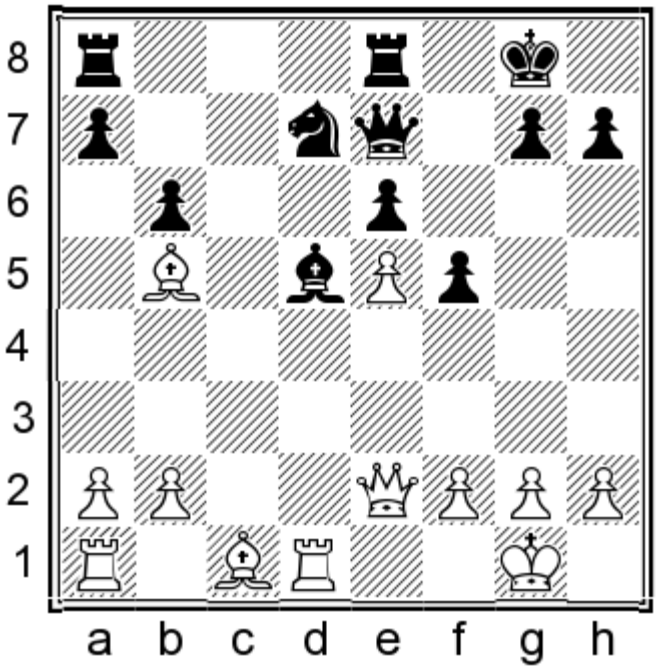
15...♗xe5

No other move is possible without losing the exchange.

16.dxe5 ♕e7

So White has the bishop pair, but Black's position is very solid.

17.♘xd5 ♗xd5



18.♕h5!

Another great move. It seems difficult to understand where the white queen is going, but in fact it is very logical. Kramnik is preparing to play on the kingside, using the fact that his bishops are dominating most of the board.

18...g6

This is very, very risky play in my opinion, but after the safer-looking 18...h6 Black also needs to be aware of 19.♕g6 — with the simple threat of taking on h6. 19...♖ec8! seems to keep the game more-or-less balanced, but it is a very hard move to find during a practical game. 20.♗xd7 (*20.♗xh6 ♘xe5 21.♕g3 ♘g4* and Black is perfectly fine.) 20...♕xd7 21.♗xh6 ♖c2 and even being a pawn down, I think Black has good chances to be OK here, as the bishop on d5 is a beast!

19.♕h6

Now White is dominating on the dark squares around the black king.

19...♖ec8 20.♗g5 ♕f7 21.♗xd7!

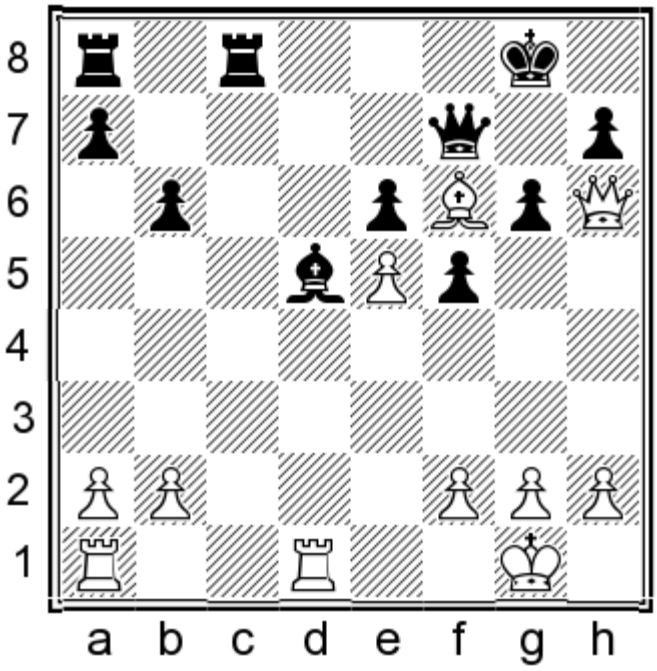
A very interesting decision to give up the bishop pair without even being asked to by a move such as ...a6. Maybe Kramnik was worried about the ♘c5-♘e4 maneuver, but in any case ♗xd7 guarantees White a clear plan over the next few moves, and that is an attack against the black king.

21...♕xd7 22.♗f6

All White needs to do now is to open the position on the kingside by playing h4-h5 and ♖d3-♖g3. On the other hand, for now it is hard to imagine that White's threats are truly that realistic.

22...♕f7

The black queen belongs on f7 anyway.



23.b3

A prophylactic move against ♖c2. Of course White could also have started with h4.

23...♕f8 24.♕f4

The queen has left the h6 square, but it doesn't change much, since White's main idea is still clearly to play h4-h5.

24...♖c2 25.h4 ♖ac8 26.h5

Black has improved his position almost to the maximum; the rooks are doubled on the c-file, but what to do next? This shows up the domination of opposite-colored bishops on the board, where one bishop is well-placed and the other one is actually the strong one, doing a great job in the mating attack.

26...♕e8

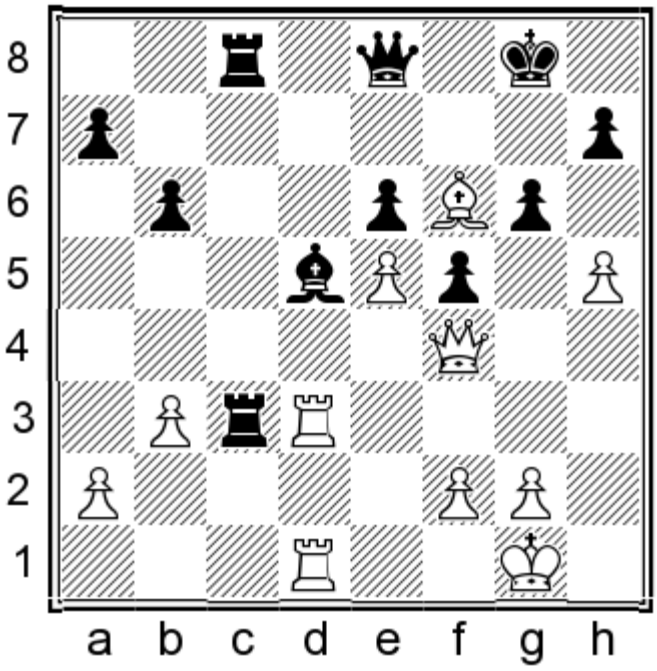
A normal move. Black cannot do much...

27.♖d3 ♖2c3

Black clearly needs to prevent White from playing ♖g3.

28.♖ad1

and once again it is hard for Black to find a move. Slowly things around the black king are getting very serious...



28...gxh5?

This radical decision is based on a miscalculation. Even in hard times, it is often just better to stay cool: 28...♕f7 would continue the ugly fight for survival.

29.♖xd5!!

Kramnik doesn’t miss his chance to land a tactical blow!

29...exd5 30.e6

This it the move that Topalov probably over-looked. Black can’t take the e6 pawn and ♕g5 is a deadly threat.

30...♖3c7

Nothing was of any help already! If Black would go for the e6 pawn with 30...♖3c6, White would have the calm and not-so-hard-to-find winning move 31.♖d3 ♖xe6 32.♖g3+ ♔f7 33.♕h6 with mate to follow in the next couple of moves.

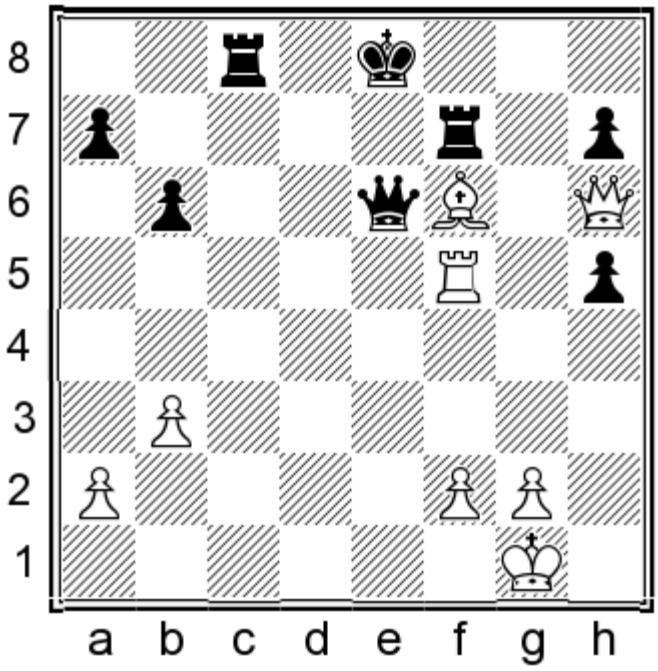
31.♖xd5

Simple and strong. Next up is ♖xf5.

31...♕xe6 32.♕g5+ ♔f8 33.♖xf5

There is just no escape for Black with such an open king on f8. On the other hand, the exchange ‚advantage’ doesn’t help at all and the white king is feeling very safe on g1. The game is over.

33...♖f7 34.♕h6+ ♔e8



35.♖e5

Winning the queen...

35...♖c6 36.♕xh5

A great game by Kramnik, who understands excellently that the opposite-colored bishops will bring him a very dangerous attack in the long term. A nice game to learn from!

1–0

GAME 49
A. Naiditsch (2689)
B. Esen (2565)
20th European Teams Reykjavik ISL (4.3)
16.11.2015, [B91]
Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

The European Team Championship witnessed my first participation for the team of Azerbaijan. I played on the 1st board for Germany for over 10 years and of course I wanted to do well for my new team. Right out of the opening I managed to get a decent advantage using a nice positional idea, which led to easy play for White on the kingside, an area where Black needed to be very careful. My opponent seemed to clearly underestimate how dangerous things could become and finally gave me the opportunity to produce a very nice mating combination

1.e4 c5

Usually the Turkish players are well-prepared, but their opening repertoires are pretty much the same, so before the game I knew that in case I went for a main-line Sicilian, it would most probably be a Najdorf.

2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6

and indeed, it is the Najdorf.

6.g3

I recently added this calm-but-tricky system with 6.g3 to my repertoire. Usually I played the more sharp and direct 6.♗g5, followed by f4.

6...g6

This is clearly not the main move, but Esen is just repeating my game against Sebag, where I got no advantage out of the opening with White. 6...e5 7.♘b3 would lead to the main lines.

7.♗g2 ♗g7 8.0-0 0-0

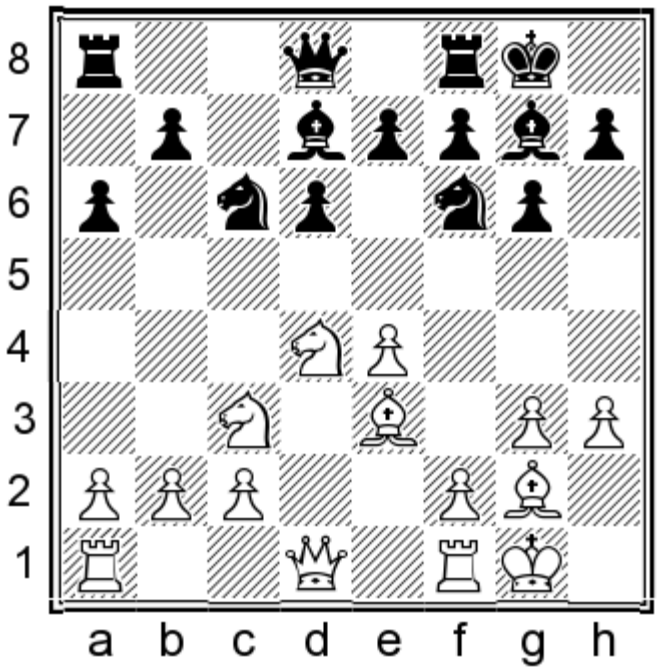
We have a sort of Sheveningen with g3-♗g2 but now Black has already played the a6 move, which just cannot be so good. The usual idea of black is ♘c6-♗d7 and ♖c8 where a6 is not really needed.

9.h3

I wanted to play ♗e3 next, so I needed to prevent ♘g4.

9...♘c6 10.♗e3 ♗d7

So far the game is very logical and of course I had this position in my preparation.



11.♘de2!?

This is almost a novelty, and a very cunning move. The position is very complex and not easy to understand, but to put it simply: White's basic idea is to play ♘d5 next and hope for ♘xd5 exd5, after which the e7 pawn becomes a long term target. It is also useful not to exchange all the knights, as the knight on c6 could get into trouble after exd5 (in case ♘xd4 is not possible, which is why 11.♘de2 was played).

11...♖c8

Again Black chooses the most natural move.

12.♘d5

Now White's idea becomes visible. I want to play ♗b6 or ♘b6 next. We can also see the weakness on b6 and why the version of the variation with a6 is clearly in White's favor.

12...♘xd5

12...e6 13.♘b6 and I am winning the d6 pawn next.

13.exd5 ♘b8?

This move is just a big mistake. What was very strange was that my opponent played it instantly... however, Black should have continued with 13...♘a5 (the knight is going to c4) 14.♗d4! A strong reply! Now White's idea is to play b3 next, blocking the movement of the knight on a5 and there is also no reason to be afraid of Black's play on the c-file, since the simple ♖c1 would protect the pawn, followed by ♕d2 and ♖fe1 with a slightly better position for White.

14.♘d4

Preventing ♗b5. Now the black knight has no squares to go to from b8.

14...a5

the knight is heading back out via a6 in the game, but all this is very slow.

15.♕d2 ♖e8

The e7 pawn has to be protected anyway in the near future and perhaps White wanted to play ♗h6 at some point.

16.♖fe1

My play is simple, I just bring the pieces into the game.

16...♘a6 17.♖e2

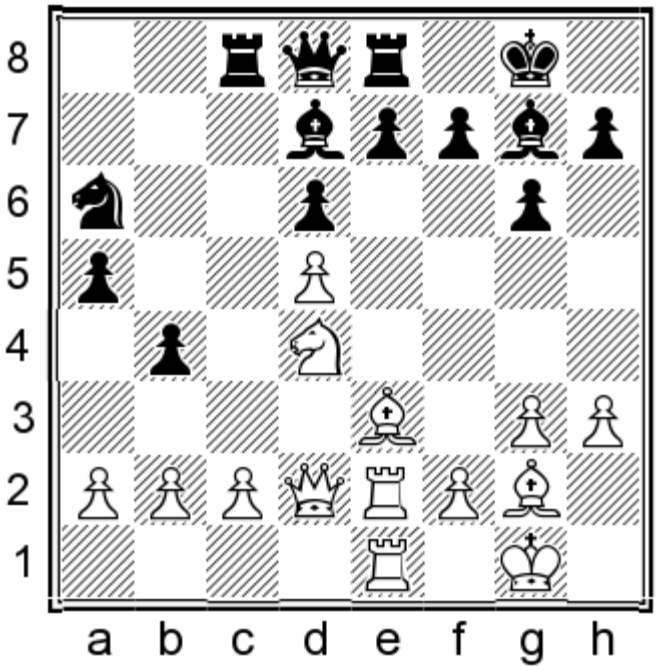
To double on the e-file can't be wrong.

17...b5

Black seems not to care too much about my actions, which is a bit strange. It was really time to think about how to stop White's play, maybe with the e6 push at some point?!

18.♖ae1 b4

It is finally time for some direct action!



19.♗g5!

The pawn on e7 is in big trouble!

19...♕b6

What else to do?! After 19...♗e5 I wanted to continue with the simple 20.f4 ♗xd4+ 21.♕xd4 f6 22.♗h6 and Black's position is very dangerous. White's plan is again simple; to push on the e-file and maybe to play g4-g5 next (or even h4-h5) with great pressure.

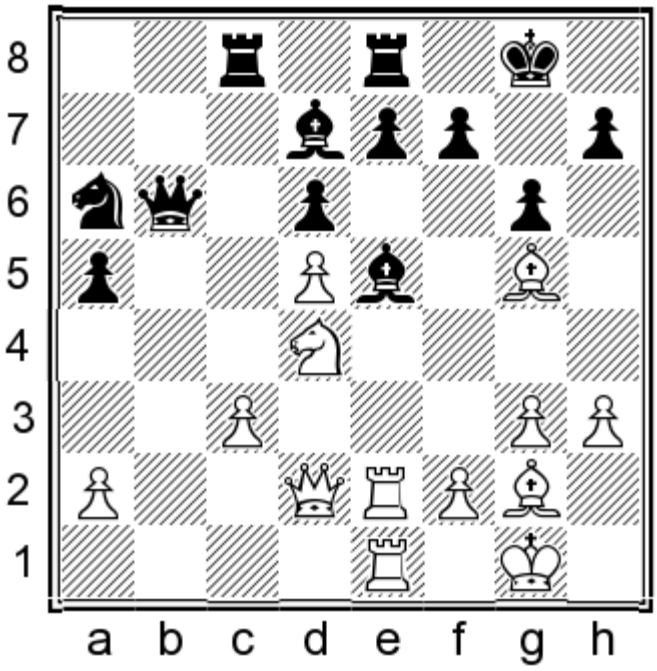
20.c3

Protecting the knight on d4. For some time I was calculating 20.♘c6 ♗xc6 21.dxc6 Now Black has to continue with 21...e6 22.♕xd6 ♗xb2 and I was not that sure about the evaluation of this position. I thought I should be better with the very strong pawn on c6, but Black is solid as well, so of course 20.c3 looks much simpler.

20...e5?

This move just loses by force. Before committing to something, Black should have taken on c3 in any case. 20...bxc3 21.bxc3 e5

(In case of 21...♗e5



22.♔h2! Preparing the f4 push.

(It is too early for *22.f4 ♗xd4+ 23.cxd4 f6* and now the direct win of the pawn on e7 doesn't work: *24.♖xe7 fxg5 25.♖xd7 ♖xe1+ 26.♕xe1 ♕xd4+ 27.♔h2* and here comes the saving move: *27...♘c5!* Attacking the rook on d7 and protecting the e6 square at the same time. *28.♖xd6 gxf4* with a very unclear position.)

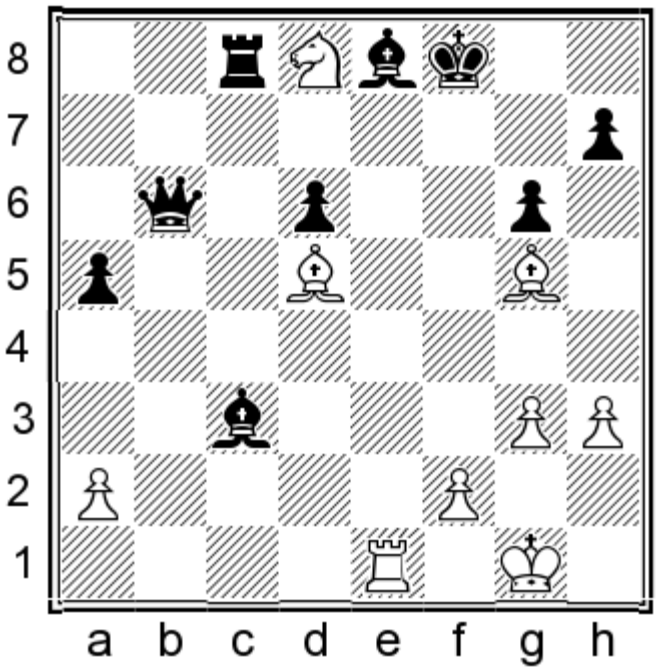
22...♘c7 23.f4 and White is clearly much better.)

22.dxe6 fxe6 and now I would have to decide what to do next, to choose a forced line or play the simple 23.♘xe6 which leads to crazy complications, into which I would probably not have plunged.

(*23.♗h6* is the move I liked the most. White is better.)

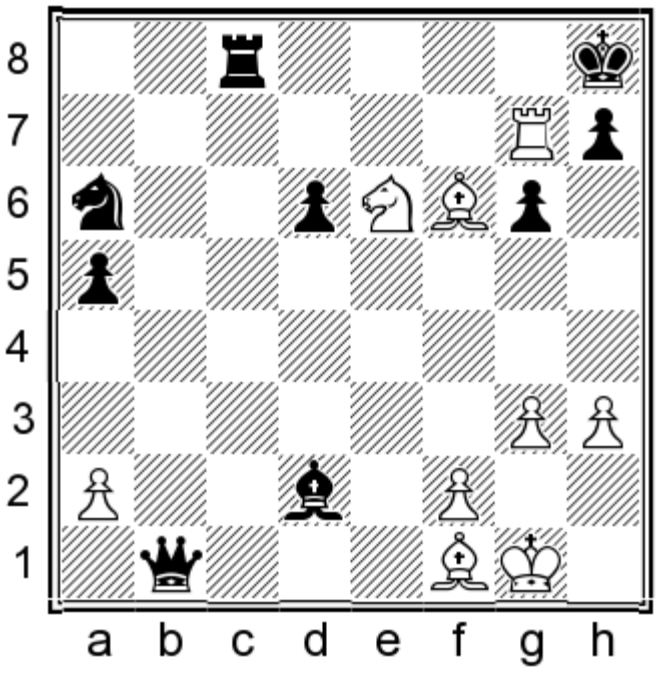
23...♗xc3 24.♘d8! A beautiful move with similar motifs as in the game.

(*24.♕d5* just leads to a draw: *24...♘b4 25.♘d8+* but now Black has the g7 square for the escape of his king in comparison to the game. *25...♘xd5 26.♗xd5+ ♔f8 27.♖xe8+ ♗xe8*



28.♗h6+ ♗g7 29.♘e6+ ♔g8 30.♘d8+ ♔f8 31.♘e6+ and this forced line just leads to a draw.)

24...♗xd2 25.♖xe8+ ♗xe8 26.♖xe8+ ♔g7 27.♖e7+ The black king is fighting alone against all the white pieces. 27...♔f8 28.♘e6+ ♔g8 29.♖g7+ ♔h8 30.♗f6 But here as well Black finds a way to continue the fight with 30...♕b1+ 31.♗f1



31...♗c3 32.♖b7+ ♗xf6 33.♖xb1 ♘c5 White is a bit better, but the position is objectively close to a draw. Why do all beautiful lines always end up in nothing?! :)

21.dxe6 fxe6 22.♘xe6

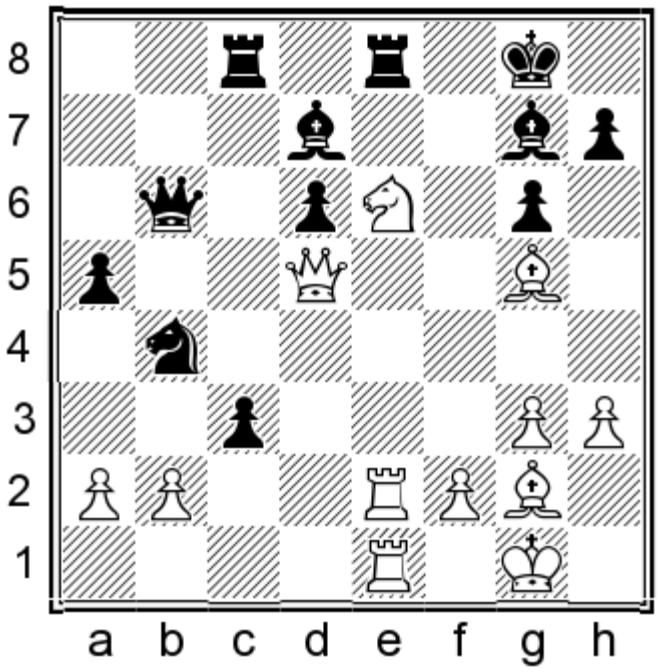
Now I am just winning!

22...bxc3 23.♕d5!

This is the key. White does not need to take on c3.

23...♘b4

There is already nothing else to play...



24.♘d8+!

My opponent probably blundered this idea when playing 20...e5.

24...♘xd5 25.♖xe8+

The black king is in a mating net!

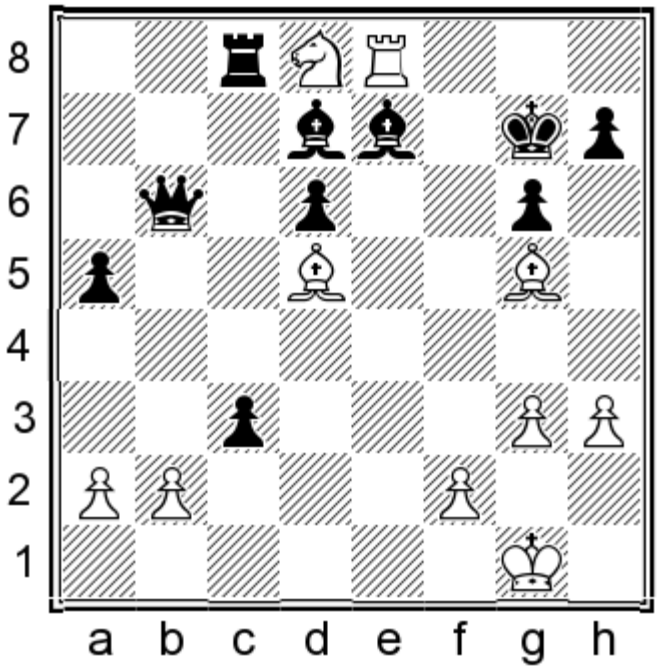
25...♗f8

25...♗xe8 also leads to mate: 26.♗xd5+ ♗f7 27.♗xf7+ ♔f8 28.♖e8#

26.♗xd5+

There are too many white pieces around the black king.

26...♔g7 27.♖1e7+ ♗xe7



28.♖g8#

A beautiful end to a nice game, but the key to victory was 11.♘de2!?, which layed the foundations of the strategic direction for White's play during the middlegame!

1–0

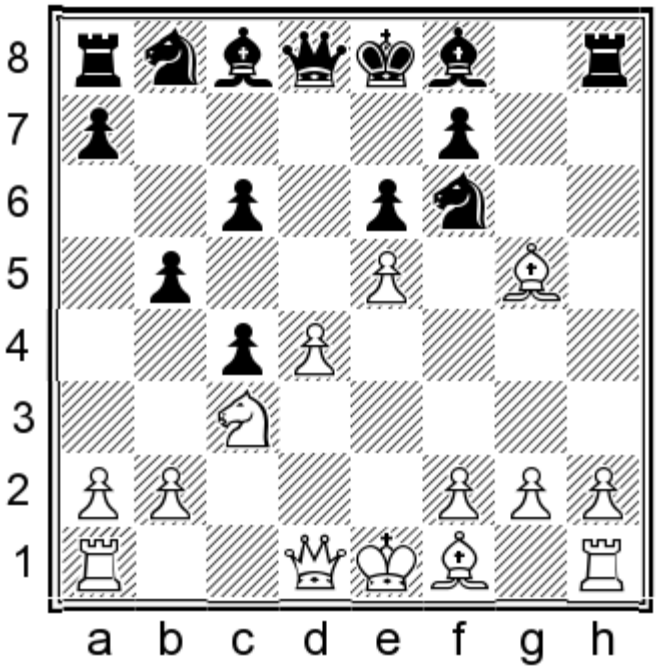
GAME 50
Yue Wang (2729)
Xiangzhi Bu (2710)
1st China Chess King 2015 Taizhou CHN (1.2)
25.11.2015, [D44]
Annotated by Balogh Csaba

Usually we see subtle positional fights between these two top Chinese GMs, but this time it turns into a very sharp game right out of the opening.

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3

The pet line of most of the Chinese players is the Slav Defence with 4...dxc4, but Bu Xiangzhi plays another main system now.

4...e6 5.♗g5 dxc4 6.e4 b5 7.e5 h6 8.♗h4 g5 9.♘xg5 hxg5 10.♗xg5



We are at the tabiya position of the extremely interesting Botvinnik System of the Semi-Slav Defense. Many lines have been analysed up to move 40 and current theory considers it playable for both sides.

10...♗e7

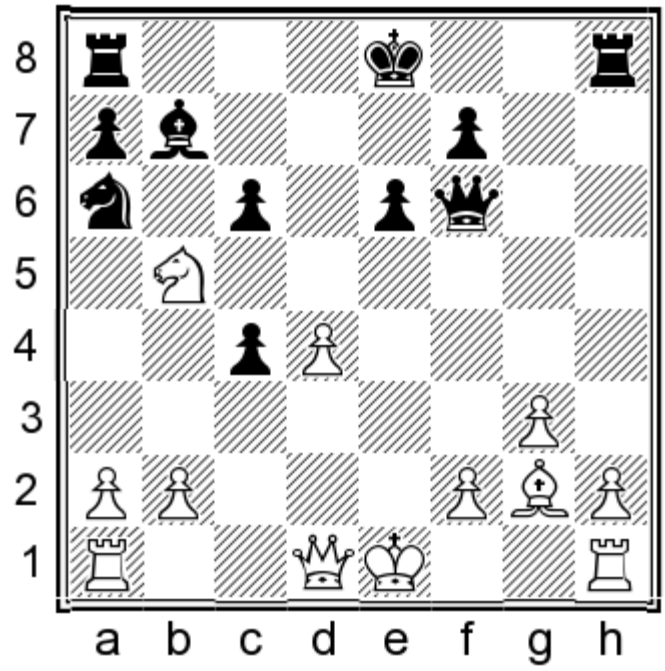
This is not the most common move, but it also seems to be quite playable. Recently it was employed a few times by the young Chinese GM Lu Shanglei and Bu follows his compatriot. The main line starts with 10...♘bd7.

11.exf6 ♗xf6 12.♗xf6 ♕xf6 13.g3

This is the ideal development for the bishop. White should already consider where is he going to ensure the safety of his king? The best is to achieve it by kingside castling after ♗g2. The opened h-file looks scary, but actually White can simply play h4 at some point and Black is missing his g- and h-pawns to explode the kingside through g5 or h5-h4. This is known from many lines of this opening.

13...♘a6 14.a4?!

This is a basically the novelty. White would like to make use of the fact, that the bishop is still on f1 and it keeps an eye on the c4 pawn. If Black does something with the b5 pawn, or just let it falls, then c4 will also hang afterwards. However White is going to miss his bishop from the long diagonal — which turns out to be a much more important factor in the game than being ahead in material. White should play the most natural moves 14.♗g2 ♗b7 15.♘e4 and this seems to be the most critical. A recent top game continued with 15.♘xb5 but Black is well prepared for the complications



15...0-0-0! 16.♕a4 cxb5 17.♗xb7+ ♔xb7 18.♕xb5+ ♔a8 19.♕c6+

(*19.*♕*xa6?* loses to *19...*♕*f3!* and White suddenly gets mated. His rook is hanging and Black is coming with ♖xd4. *20.0-0* runs into *20...*♖*xh2!–+* and mate to follow.)

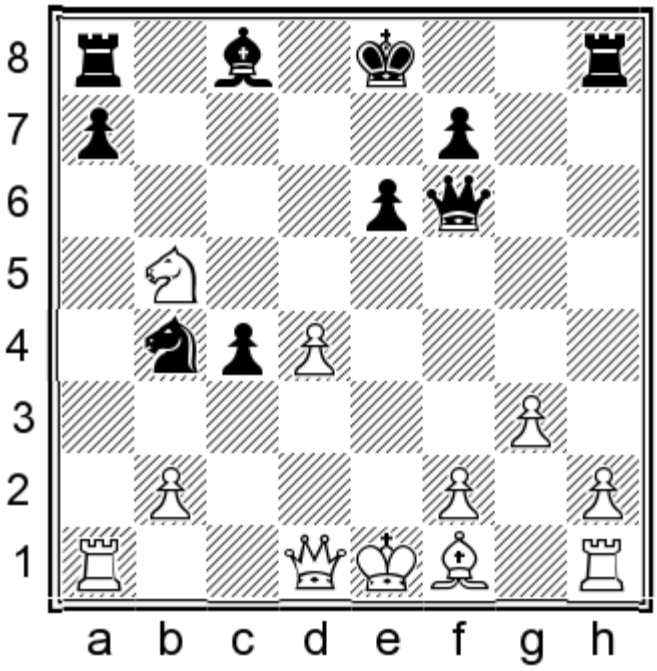
19...♔b8 20.♕b5+ ♔a8 21.♕c6+ ♔b8 22.♕b5+ ♔a8 draw after a forced perpetual check. (1/2 Svidler-Lu Shanglei, Ningbo 2015) 15...♕e7 16.0-0 0-0-0 17.a4 both sides require huge preparation to draw a conclusion from this line.

14...♘b4!

Bu Xiangzhi correctly sacrifices his pawn; he feels that the compensation should be worth this minimal material investment if he can quickly activate his pieces.

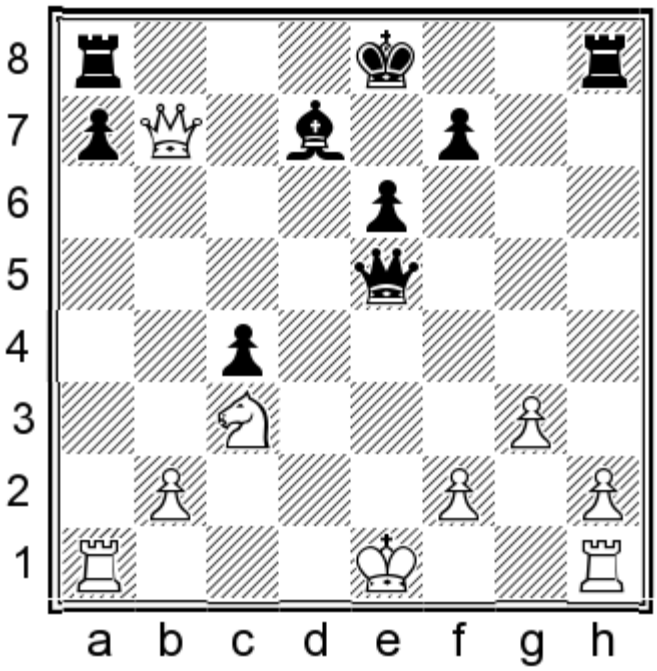
15.axb5 cxb5 16.♘xb5

Accepting the challenge; a consequent follow up at least.



Another way of winning a pawn was 16.♗xc4 although Black has pleasant choices here as well 16...♗b7

(*16...bxc4* is also possible *17.*♕*a4+* ♗*d7 18.*♕*xb4* ♕*xd4* White might find some accurate moves to stay in the game. *19.*♕*b7!* preventing ♗c6! *19...*♕*e5+!* with the idea of ♖b8 next move



20.♘*e4!* ♖*b8 21.f4!* Just in time! White manages to trade queens and the endgame is drawish. *21...*♖*xb7 22.fxe5*=)

17.♗xb5+ ♔f8 looks horrible for White to human eyes, but the engine holds it together with some tenacious moves.

16...♔f8!

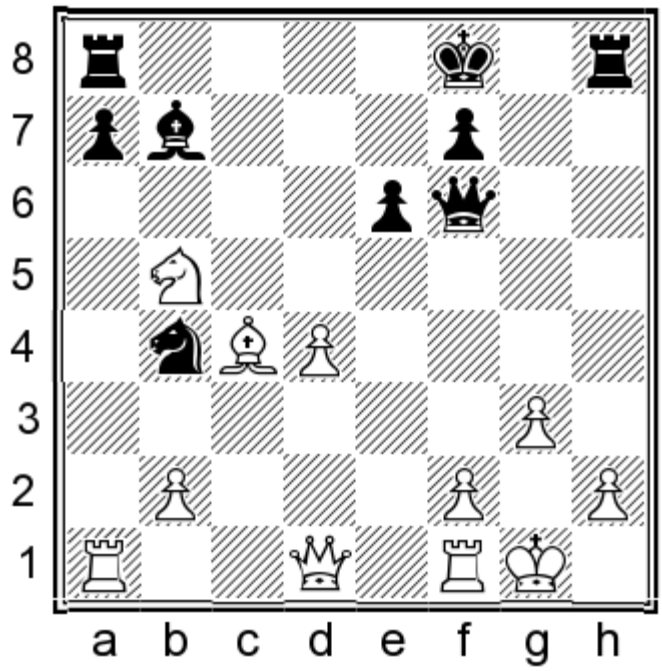
An excellent prophylactic move! Black removes his king from the different threats, such as ♕a4, ♘d6 or ♘c7. Black also creates the threat of ♗b7 and ♕f5 with a double attack on b5 and ♘c2.

17.♕d2

Trying to develop with tempo, but it turns out to be a mistake. The queen would be better used to control the f3 square. White should have taken the second pawn with 17.♗xc4! ♗b7 18.f3!

a) 18.♖f1 ♖xh2 Black has an enormous attack;

b) 18.0-0 is refuted brilliantly by



18...♕h4!! and mate is coming soon.

(but not *18...♖xh2?* because of *19.d5!* and White is alive.)

19.gxh4 ♖g8+–+;

18...♗xf3 19.0-0! White survives at the end of this following concrete line 19...♕h6! 20.♖xf3! ♕xh2+ 21.♔f1 ♕xb2!

(*21...♕h1+?* does not work in view of *22.♔e2 ♖h2+ 23.♔e3 ♘c2+ 24.♕xc2!*)

22.♔g1

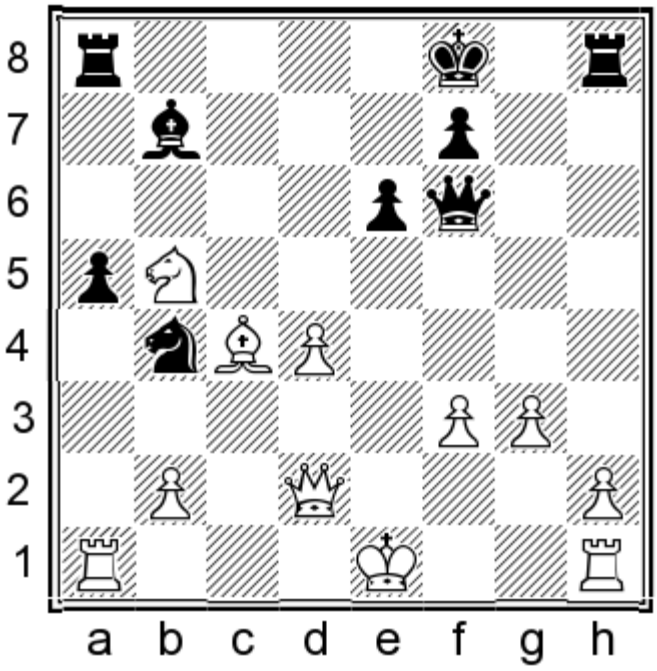
(White cannot play for more than a draw with *22.♖f2* as it loses to *22...♕xa1! 23.♕xa1 ♖h1+–+*)

22...♕h2+ with a draw by repetition. Unfortunately for White, he cannot play 17.♗g2? anymore because of 17...♘d3+

17...a5!

Maintaining the dangerous knight on it’s outpost.

18.♗xc4 ♗b7 19.f3



19.♖f1 ♖xh2∓ is too bad with such a weak king on e1.

19...♖c8!!

This great intermediate move -attacking the bishop first before taking on f3 — wins the game! Most probably it was missed or underestimated by Wang Yue when he played 17.♕d2. The following lines show how strong it is. 19...♕xf3 20.♖f1 ♕e4+ 21.♔d1

20.♕c3

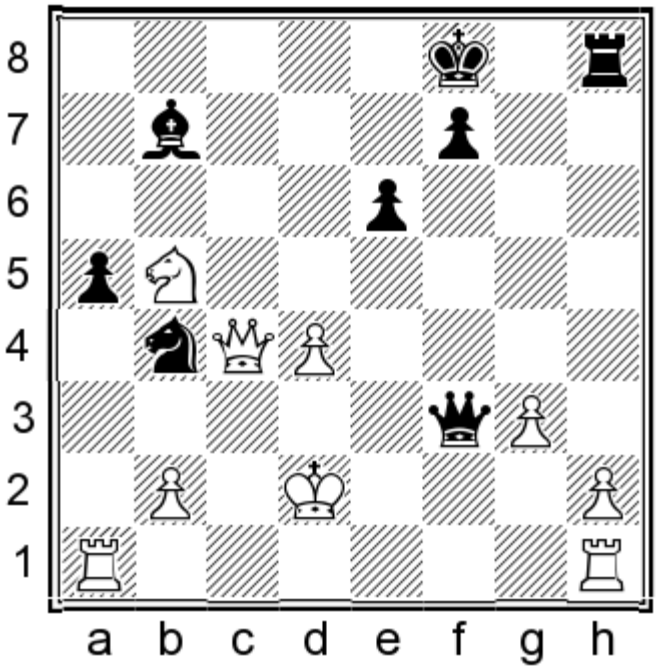
20.♘d6 loses to 20...♖xc4! 21.♘xc4 ♕xf3 This is the point of 19...♖c8! Without the light-squared bishop, White gets mated with ♘d3! 22.♖f1 ♘d3+–+;

20.♖c1 has the same refutation 20...♖xc4! 21.♖xc4 ♕xf3 22.♖f1 ♘d3+–+

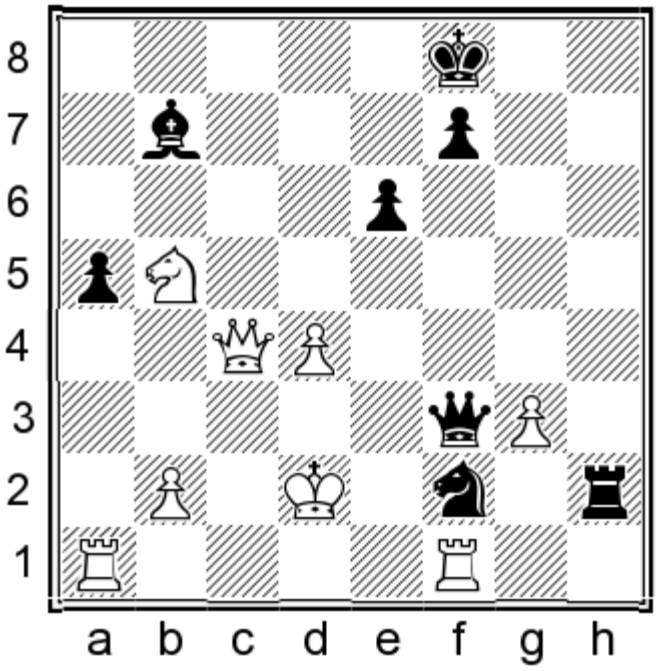
20...♖xc4!

There is no mate with ♕f3-♘d3 as occurred in the previous lines (because the d2 square is free for the king) but it is clear that the attack is still going to break through somehow. I am quite sure that Bu Xiangzhi was NOT sure at this point what his concrete moves would be, but top players trust in their intuition.

21.♕xc4 ♕xf3 22.♔d2



22.♖f1 loses quickly to 22...♘d3+ 23.♔d2 ♖xh2+ 24.♔c3 Black has different wins, the fastest being 24...♘f2+ 25.♔d2



25...♘d1+! 26.♔c1 ♕e3+ 27.♔b1 (*27.♔xd1 ♕d2#*) 27...♖xb2# a truly picturesque mate with the knight on d1!

22...♖h5!!

A cold-blooded follow-up to the exchange sacrifice. The direct queen checks on f2 or g2 were neutralized by ♕e2, but after the rook move, the b5 knight is hanging at the end. Black is also threatening with ♗a6! White has no adequate defense.

23.♖he1

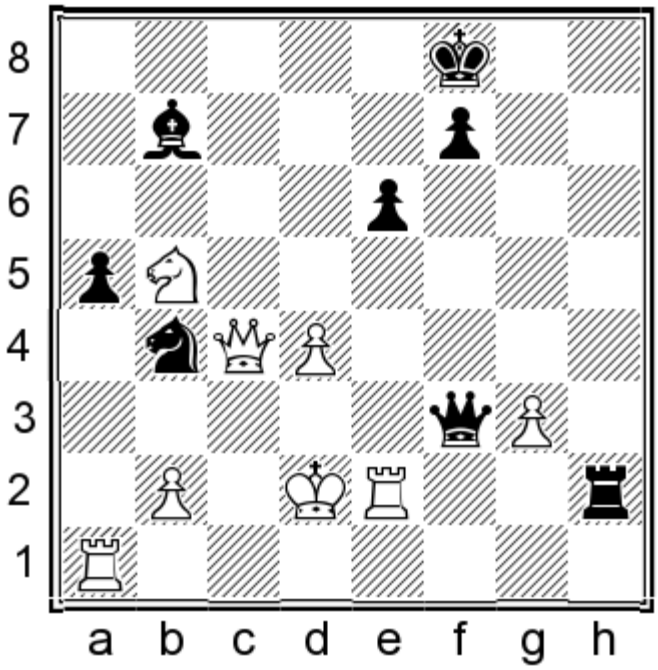
23.♘c3 saves the knight, but loses to 23...♗a6!–+;

23.♖af1 ♕g2+ 24.♕e2 (*24.♔c1 ♖xb5 25.♕xb5 ♕c2#*) 24...♕xe2+ 25.♔xe2 ♗xh1 26.♖xh1 ♖xb5–+

23...♖xh2+

The human win! Machines prefer 23...♗d5 24.♕e2 ♕b3–+

24.♖e2



24...♗d5!

Bu pursues the attack with great power to the very end! White has an extra exchange, but the a1-rook is out of the game, while all the black pieces are looking at the lonely king. The last move requires precise calculation, but it is not so difficult at this level.

25.♕c8+ ♔g7 26.♖xh2 ♕d3+ 27.♔e1

On 27.♔c1 ♕e3+ 28.♖d2 (on any other king move a bishop check is fatal) and now 28...♗b3!–+ White gets mated! We can see great harmony between the 3 black pieces and how useless the white rooks are.

27...♕xg3+ 28.♖f2

28.♔f1 ♕xh2–+

28...♘d3+ 29.♔e2?

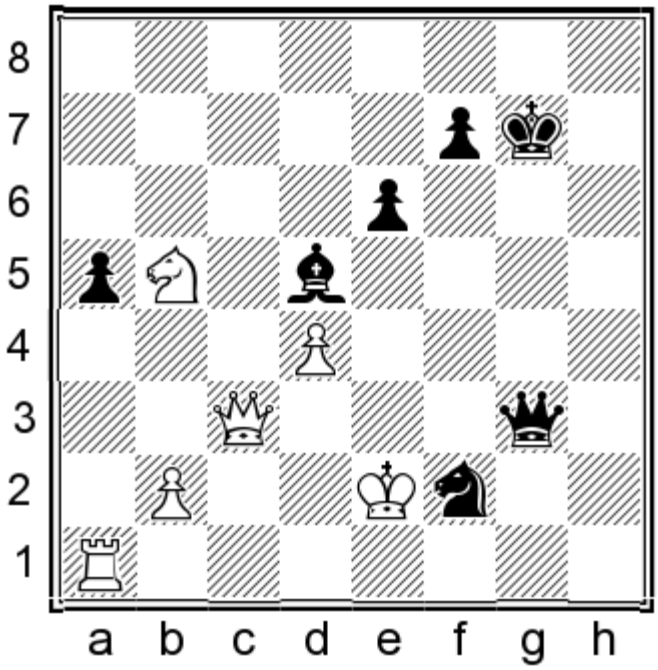
The only move was 29.♔d2! ♘xf2 30.♖e1! but Black has an easy technical win here as well 30...♘e4+ 31.♖xe4 ♗xe4–+ a pawn up, a dominating bishop over the knight and a vulnerable white king who still needs to be careful to not get mated despite the simplification of the position.

29...♘xf2

White has no defense against ♕f3, ♕g2, ♗e4 or many other threats. He cannot regroup his pieces to give shelter to the

king.

30.♕c3



30.♖a3 ♕g2–+

30...♕g2!

Obviously the queens stay on board. White cannot avoid a knight jump in the next move, which is going to be decisive.

31.♔e1 ♘e4

White resigned in view of 31...♘e4 32.♕e3 Otherwise ♕f2 or ♕d2. 32...♕h1+ 33.♔e2 ♗c4+–+

0–1